

delivery of educational services to gifted and talented students in small, rural school districts and collaboration and cooperation among educational providers in making the most efficient use possible of available funds.

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Background

As issues of educational equity and quality continue to be explored, there is frequent discussion regarding the limited scope of course offerings, especially in the state's smaller high schools, together with limited opportunities for all high school students to pursue courses that are more academically challenging than those made available through the standard high school curriculum. One option for addressing these concerns is a postsecondary enrollment options program. Beginning with the premise that education occurs along a continuum, rather than in a segmented fashion, postsecondary enrollment options programs seek to involve institutions of higher education in providing greater options and opportunities to high school students.

A postsecondary enrollment options program allows 11th and 12th grade students who are enrolled in a public high school and who meet certain admission criteria to enroll in institutions of higher education on a part-time or a full-time basis and receive high school credit, postsecondary credit, or both, for courses successfully completed.

These programs generally fall into one of three categories. The first category involves comprehensive programs that are offered at minimal or no cost to students. Credits earned under the programs apply to both high school and postsecondary requirements and few restrictions are imposed regarding the courses to be taken. Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maine, New Jersey, Ohio, Utah, and Washington have enacted this type of program. In the second category, the programs are less comprehensive. Tuition is generally paid if the student enrolls in the postsecondary course for high school credit only and restrictions are placed on the types of courses deemed acceptable. Minnesota and Wisconsin have enacted this type of program. The third category is limited programs. Students pay the costs associated with the postsecondary courses, academic credit restrictions are imposed on the courses, and stringent eligibility criteria are enforced. Arizona, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, and Louisiana have implemented this type of program. The committee studied representative programs from each category.

The Colorado Program

Colorado enacted its postsecondary enrollment options program in 1988. According to the original Act:

- High school students need to be continually challenged to maintain their academic

interests;

- Such challenges must include rigorous academic pursuits;
- Exposure to academic challenges declines during the last two years of high school as students complete their graduation requirements;
- There exists a high dropout rate among 11th and 12th graders;
- Courses offered in a setting other than a high school may provide, for certain students, a stimulation or maintenance of interest;
- By offering a wider variety of options and by encouraging and enabling high school students to enroll in courses offered by state institutions, students are provided with new and exciting academic challenges; and
- Postsecondary enrollment options programs provide access to excellence in education.

Postsecondary schools that are eligible to participate in the program include the state colleges and universities, junior colleges, and community colleges; independent vocational schools; and nonpublic institutions of higher education.

A student is eligible to participate in the program if the student is 21 years of age or younger, is enrolled in the 11th or 12th grade, and is in need of coursework at a higher academic level than that available at the student's school or is in need of a different environment.

Each school district is required to notify its students and parents of the program. Any student wishing to participate must notify the school district in writing of the student's intent at least two months before enrollment. The student must specify the courses in which the student intends to enroll. Allowable courses are any offered by the institution of enrollment.

Every allowable course counts as credit toward the student's high school graduation requirements, unless the credit is specifically denied by the student's high school principal and upheld by both the district superintendent and the local school board. The requirement that a course must be taught by a certificated teacher if high school credit is to be awarded is waived.

When a student enrolls in the program, the student's school district and the institution of higher education enter a cooperative agreement. The agreement must provide that any coursework undertaken by the student qualifies as credit toward a high school diploma and toward a postsecondary degree or certificate. The agreement also must provide that the student will not be required to pay tuition charges.

A participating institution of higher education is responsible for the content of any course taken by a high school student under the program and for the quality of the instruction.

With respect to financial provisions, an institution is reimbursed by the student's school district of residence for costs, as provided by the agreement. The amount of tuition is the same as that charged for a resident university-level student

taking the course. If the student voluntarily drops the course, without the consent of the student's principal, the student and the student's parent or legal guardian must reimburse the school district for the amount of any tuition paid by the district. The student is responsible for transportation.

For purposes of calculating average daily membership, a student who is receiving high school credit is counted as being in attendance at high school even when participating in the postsecondary enrollment options program. However, that student may not be included by the postsecondary institution in determining the number of full-time equivalent students in that institution unless the student is not receiving high school credit for the course.

An institution of higher education is permitted to limit the number of students enrolled under the program. The program is not applicable to students enrolled in summer school.

The Minnesota Program

In 1984 Minnesota enacted a program under which high school students could take academic courses at institutions of higher education and receive high school credit for those courses. In 1985 Minnesota enacted its Postsecondary Enrollment Options Act to enable high school students to enroll full time or part time in nonsectarian courses or programs in eligible institutions of higher education.

Eligible institutions of higher education include public postsecondary institutions; private, nonprofit, two-year trade and technical schools; the Opportunities Industrialization Center accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; and private, residential, two-year and four-year liberal arts degree-granting colleges or universities in Minnesota.

On or before March 1 of each year, school districts are to provide general information about the program to all students in grades 10 and 11. A student interested in participating in the program is to notify the school district before March 30.

Any 11th or 12th grade student enrolled in a public school, other than an international exchange student enrolled in a district under a cultural exchange program, may apply to an eligible institution of higher education. If the student is accepted, the institution is to notify the student's school district and the state Commissioner of Children, Families, and Learning within 10 days. The notification must include the courses and hours of enrollment. The institution must grant priority to its postsecondary students when filling courses. Once a high school student has been enrolled in a course, however, that student may not be displaced by a postsecondary student.

A student may enroll in a course for either high school or postsecondary credit. Seven quarter or four semester college credits equal at least one full year of a high school course. Proration is used to determine course credits. If a comparable course is offered by the district, the student must be

granted a comparable number of credits. If a comparable course is not offered by the district, the district must ask the Commissioner of Children, Families, and Learning to determine the number of credits to be awarded.

The Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning reimburses institutions that enroll high school students under the program if the student is receiving high school credit. If the student is receiving postsecondary credit, all accompanying charges are the responsibility of the student. The rate of payment for which a postsecondary institution is eligible is determined by a statutory formula. The institution may not charge a student for whom it receives payment under the program for fees, textbooks, materials, or other necessary costs of the course or program. All textbooks and equipment provided to a student are the property of the student's school district of residence and must be returned by the student upon completion of the course.

For the purpose of determining average daily membership, students participating in the postsecondary enrollment options program are deemed to be students in attendance at their school district of residence.

Unlike many of the other postsecondary enrollment options programs in which transportation is the responsibility of the student and the student's parents, the Minnesota program provides that parents may apply to the school district of residence for transportation reimbursement. The reimbursement is based on financial need and is set at the actual cost or 15 cents per mile, whichever is less. Reimbursement may not be paid for more than 250 miles per week. If, however, the nearest postsecondary institution is more than 25 miles from the student's high school, the weekly reimbursement may not exceed the per mile rate multiplied by the actual distance between the high school and the nearest postsecondary institution, times 10. Transportation reimbursement is not available to any student who enrolls in the postsecondary enrollment options program for postsecondary credit.

If a student is enrolled in a high school that is more than 40 miles from the nearest eligible institution of higher education, the student may request that the school district offer at least one accelerated or advanced academic course for postsecondary credit within the district. Upon being requested to do so, the school district must offer at least one such course during the next academic period and must continue to do so in later academic periods. The district may decide which course to offer and how to offer the course. If a postsecondary-level course is taught for high school credit in a high school setting, the teacher must meet the university's requirements for an adjunct instructor. State regulations requiring that high school courses be taught by certificated teachers are not applicable to any postsecondary-level courses for which a student may obtain high school credit.

The Arkansas Program

Arkansas allows any public school student who has successfully completed the eighth grade to apply for admission to and, if accepted, enroll in a publicly supported community college or four-year college or university. Upon completion of the coursework at an institution of higher education, the student is eligible to receive both high school and postsecondary credit. All costs associated with the program are borne by the student.

The Minnesota Experience

After having a postsecondary enrollment options program in place for nearly a decade, the Research Department of the Minnesota House of Representatives undertook a study of the program, the students who enrolled in it, the types of courses taken by the students, and the financial impact of the program. The research indicated that almost half of the students who participated were from the metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The research also indicated that 47 percent of all K-12 students in Minnesota were from the metropolitan Minneapolis-St. Paul area.

On average, seven percent of a school district's 11th and 12th graders participated in the program. Those districts with moderate rates of participation (those in the five to 15 percent range) tended to be relatively close to an institution of higher education. Those districts with the highest rates of participation (those in the 40 percent plus range) had no institution of higher education readily accessible.

Forty-one percent of the participants enrolled in courses at community colleges, 26 percent enrolled at the University of Minnesota, 18 percent enrolled at technical colleges, 10 percent enrolled at state universities, and five percent enrolled at private colleges. The most popular courses included:

Communications	24%
Social science	19%
Vocational courses	12%
Mathematics	8%
Science	7%
Art/music	5%
Foreign language	5%
Business	5%

Physical education, history, humanities, health, applied mathematics, and miscellaneous subjects were in the two to four percent range.

During the 1992 fiscal year, the cost of the program was approximately \$31 million. The cost of educating those same students if the program had not been in existence would have been approximately \$28 million. The research showed that in the long term, the state would also see financial benefits because of student participation in the program. The reason for this is that the state pays a portion of the cost of educating public college students, regardless of whether those students are high school students participating in the postsecondary enrollment options program or college-level students. However, the state pays

less to educate a high school student enrolled in the postsecondary enrollment options program than it does to educate a college student taking the same course.

The research concluded that the program also has long-term benefits that are less tangible. Among these benefits are the fact that the program gives postsecondary institutions in the state an advantage in recruiting and retaining some of the best and brightest high school students and the fact that the program seems to meet the needs of students who are not doing well within the traditional high school system.

The Moorhead State University Experience

The committee met with faculty, staff, and students at Moorhead State University regarding implementation of the postsecondary enrollment options program at that institution. Area high school students who attend Moorhead State University under the program are provided with a wide variety of college-level courses. The high school students are expected to meet the same standards as those imposed upon traditional college-level students.

Moorhead State University sets its own admission criteria. Students often are required to be ranked in the upper half of their high school class. A student's desire to enroll in a class is not sufficient criteria for admission. Approximately 25 high school students attend Moorhead State University on a full-time basis. The experience of Moorhead State University has been that the high school students who attend under the auspices of the postsecondary enrollment options program have a very high rate of success and are generally at the top of their high school class, very mature, academically astute, and very committed to succeeding in their postsecondary-level courses.

The Moorhead Public School District Experience

When the postsecondary enrollment options program was first implemented, Minnesota school districts received foundation aid dollars that were prorated according to the amount of time spent by a student in the student's school district of residence. The remainder of the per student entitlement was sent to the postsecondary institution attended by the student. In 1993 the Minnesota Legislature guaranteed school districts a minimum of 12 percent of the per student foundation aid payment, even if the student did not enroll in any high school class. Although this was an improvement for school districts, 15 school districts still experienced a combined loss of \$100,000 in foundation aid payments during the 1994-95 school year. The school districts maintained that even though they were not actually educating the students, they still had the responsibility for so doing and with the responsibility there should be funding.

The Moorhead Public School District has experienced a three to four percent reduction in the number of its full-time 11th and 12th grade students as a result of the program and this has

affected staffing patterns. While staff preservation was one of the biggest obstacles to participation in the program, however, school district staff and administration have come to realize that their purpose is to provide educational opportunities for their students and to do whatever is best for their students.

One example of enriched opportunities for students comes in the area of foreign languages. While students have three foreign language options through the Moorhead Public School District, they have these additional languages available to them through the postsecondary enrollment options program: Arabic, Chinese, Latin, Norwegian, Russian, and Swedish. Options such as these enhance the education of students and play a critical role in supplementing the educational experience for academically advanced students.

Testimony

A postsecondary enrollment options program, if designed to promote rigorous academic pursuits, would provide high school students with access to a wide variety of courses and challenges. However, such a program does have certain ramifications that should be carefully considered.

The principal concern expressed to the committee was that if North Dakota implemented a program similar to Minnesota's, the school districts of this state would suffer some loss of foundation aid. It was suggested that rather than spending tax dollars to provide a postsecondary education to certain students, all of the money should remain at the district level, because even though the district is not actually educating students participating in the program, the district is still responsible for their education.

The next concern was that if North Dakota implemented a program similar to Minnesota's, the result would be a removal of our best and brightest students--our student leaders--from their high school environments, thereby denying to the remaining students the benefit of their colleagues' leadership. The ancillary effect of such a program would be to reduce actual student numbers in the state's high schools and perhaps necessitate a discontinuance of other electives currently offered at the high school level.

The final concern was that if North Dakota implemented a program similar to Minnesota's, the state would in fact be granting high school credit to students who were instructed by university personnel and despite the fact that such personnel are qualified academically, they may lack the qualifications to teach by virtue of not being certificated high school teachers. It was suggested that a better alternative might be to encourage certificated high school teachers to teach postsecondary-level courses at the local high schools.

Committee Considerations

The committee considered a bill draft that allowed 11th and 12th grade students to enroll in

courses at postsecondary institutions and upon successful completion of the courses, to obtain both high school and postsecondary credit for their efforts. The student and the student's parents or legal guardian are responsible for the costs associated with the dual credit, as well as any necessary transportation arrangements. For purposes of foundation aid, a student enrolled in the program would be considered enrolled in the school district of residence. The student would retain eligibility to participate in all high school sports and other nonathletic activities. The bill draft also included a section providing that courses taken by a student enrolled in the postsecondary enrollment options program are considered to be postsecondary-level courses and therefore not subject to any statutory or regulatory requirements otherwise imposed upon high school courses. This would include issues of seat time, course content, course materials, and teacher certification.

Recommendation

The committee recommends Senate Bill No. 2033 to allow the enrollment of 11th and 12th grade students in courses at postsecondary institutions and upon successful completion of the courses, to obtain both high school and postsecondary credit for their efforts. This bill is viewed as an effort to create challenging opportunities for this state's high school students, without having a negative fiscal impact on school districts.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Background

Professional growth and development of teachers begins with admission to an approved teacher training program. In North Dakota, accredited programs are found at Dickinson State University, Mayville State University, Minot State University, North Dakota State University, Valley City State University, and the University of North Dakota. Jamestown College, Trinity Bible College, and the University of Mary provide accredited private programs.

To be admitted, a student must:

- Have sophomore standing with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5;
- Have satisfactorily completed English 111 and 112;
- Have successfully completed a speech screening test;
- Have a record of good conduct; and
- Have good physical and mental health.

Teacher training programs are four years in length and require successful completion of approximately 128 credit hours. Roughly one-third of the credit hours must be in general studies. Students need to have a major in a content area and 26 hours of a professional education sequence (at least 10 of those hours must be spent on student teaching assignments).

According to representatives of the educational