

Effects Of MOWR Law On High School Students

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Introduction

Georgia's Move On When Ready program was created to expand opportunities for high school students to take postsecondary courses and earn both high school and college credit. The program was later renamed and is now administered as Georgia Dual Enrollment. The original essay misstates several basic features. Students do not simply leave eleventh and twelfth grade, avoid high school examinations, or enter college without academic oversight. Eligible students remain connected to a participating high school or home study program, must be admitted by a participating postsecondary institution, select approved courses, and coordinate credit with school and college officials. Current rules also include grade-level eligibility, funding limits, application requirements, and consequences for repeated withdrawals. The most important effects are not empty high schools or automatic college profit. They concern access to advanced coursework, acceleration, readiness, equity, institutional coordination, funding, and the risk that students may earn credits that do not fit later degree plans.

From Move On When Ready to Dual Enrollment

The historical name "Move On When Ready," or MOWR, appeared in Georgia program regulations during the mid-2010s. The policy consolidated and expanded earlier dual-credit options. By the 2017–2018 program year, official regulations used the name Dual Enrollment. The current program continues the core principle: eligible high school or home study students can enroll in approved college-level coursework that counts toward both secondary and postsecondary requirements.

The change in name is more than a vocabulary issue. "Move On When Ready" can imply that students leave high school entirely, whereas dual enrollment more accurately describes simultaneous participation. Some students take one or two courses while completing most work at their high school. Others may spend much more time on a college campus or online. The arrangement depends on the student's plan, approved courses, institutional schedules, and graduation requirements.

Current Program Structure

Georgia Student Finance Commission guidance for the 2026–2027 period describes Dual Enrollment as a funding program for eligible students at participating public or private high schools and home study programs. Eleventh- and twelfth-grade students may take approved courses at eligible

University System of Georgia, Technical College System of Georgia, or private institutions. Tenth graders have more limited routes, including approved career, technical, and agricultural education courses at participating technical colleges, with broader access possible for students meeting specified test-score criteria. Ninth graders are not eligible for state Dual Enrollment funding. (Georgia Student Finance Commission, n.d.-a)

Students must apply for admission to the postsecondary institution and complete an annual funding application. A parent or guardian participation agreement is required, and the high school and college approve course selections. These procedures directly contradict the original claim that students simply bypass grades eleven and twelve without assessment or preparation.

Funding Limits and Approved Courses

State funding can cover standard undergraduate tuition, mandatory fees, and required books within program rules. The current funding cap is 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours, with additional per-term and academic-year limits. Approved courses are listed in an official directory and include core academic subjects and career, technical, and agricultural education options. Funding does not mean every course at every college is automatically available. (Georgia Student Finance Commission, n.d.-b; Georgia Student Finance Commission, 2026)

The cap encourages students and counselors to plan carefully. A learner who uses funded hours on courses that do not apply to [high school graduation](#) or a likely college program may exhaust benefits without gaining equivalent progress. Advising should therefore consider prerequisites, transferability, degree applicability, workload, and the student's long-term goals.

Effect One: Access to Advanced and Specialized Learning

The clearest positive effect is expanded access. A high school may not offer advanced mathematics, laboratory science, world languages, computer networking, health occupations, or specialized technical courses. A participating college can provide instruction, equipment, and faculty expertise that the school cannot maintain alone. Students in rural or small schools may particularly benefit when online or nearby postsecondary options are available.

Access is not identical for all students. Transportation, scheduling, broadband, admission requirements, disability services, and knowledge of the application process can create barriers. Students whose parents understand college systems may navigate the program more easily than first-generation students. Equity therefore requires outreach, advising, technology support, and practical solutions rather than a policy that exists only on paper.

Effect Two: Earlier College Credit and Reduced Time to Degree

Dual enrollment can allow students to begin college with completed credits, potentially reducing future course load, tuition expense, or time to a credential. It can also help students explore a field before committing to a major. A high school student who completes an introductory engineering, nursing, business, or technical course may gain realistic information about the discipline.

Credits do not always shorten a degree. Institutions and programs apply transfer credit differently, and professional or sequential majors may have strict requirements. A course may transfer as an elective rather than satisfy a specific degree component. Students should use transfer tools and speak with prospective colleges. The value of a dual-enrollment course should include learning and readiness, not only the number of credits accumulated.

Effect Three: College Readiness and Academic Identity

College courses expose students to new expectations: longer reading assignments, fewer graded tasks, independent study, formal communication, and responsibility for deadlines. Successfully navigating these expectations can strengthen confidence and academic identity. Students learn how to use a syllabus, contact faculty, seek tutoring, and manage competing commitments.

The experience can also reveal that a student needs additional preparation. This is not necessarily failure. Early feedback can guide course selection and support before full-time college enrollment. However, poor performance becomes part of a postsecondary academic record and can affect future standing or aid. Readiness decisions should be based on evidence and student choice, not pressure to make a school's participation numbers look impressive.

Effect Four: Changes for High Schools

The original essay predicts that high schools will empty and struggle to operate. Dual enrollment can affect enrollment patterns, staffing, and course demand, but students remain high school students working toward graduation. Schools still provide advising, approve courses, verify credit, support activities, and monitor progress. If many advanced students take college courses, a school may have difficulty sustaining low-enrollment advanced classes. Conversely, partnerships can free resources or allow the school to broaden its curriculum.

Funding formulas and accountability rules can influence institutional behavior. Schools should not steer students into or away from dual enrollment primarily for financial reasons. The central question

is whether the course is appropriate and contributes to the learner's plan.

Effect Five: Demands on Colleges

Postsecondary institutions receive younger students whose developmental, legal, and advising needs may differ from those of adult college students. Faculty must maintain college-level standards while understanding that dual-enrollment students are still completing secondary education. Colleges need clear communication about calendars, privacy rules, disability accommodations, safety, academic integrity, and withdrawal.

The original essay frames institutions mainly as gaining tuition and profit. Georgia's program involves state funding and institutional responsibilities. Colleges incur instructional, administrative, advising, technology, and materials costs. Some may benefit from enrollment and recruitment, but financial incentive should not replace academic quality. Courses taught at high schools should meet comparable faculty and assessment standards.

Online and Distance Courses

The claim that MOWR prevents all online or distance courses is inaccurate. Availability depends on the approved course directory, participating institution, and current program rules. Online learning can increase access for students far from a campus, but it requires reliable technology, self-regulation, and timely support. A student who succeeds in a structured [high school classroom](#) may struggle in an asynchronous college course without frequent reminders.

Advisors should assess more than grades. Time management, reading independence, help-seeking, home study conditions, and accessibility affect online success. Institutions should provide orientation and technical assistance rather than assuming young students already understand digital learning.

Equity and Participation Gaps

Dual enrollment can reduce inequality by bringing college courses to students who might not otherwise imagine themselves in higher education. It can also widen inequality if participation is concentrated among students who already have strong schools, transportation, test preparation, and informed families. Program evaluation should examine participation and outcomes by income, race, disability, geography, school type, and first-generation status without treating group differences as fixed ability.

Strategies for equity include automatic information sessions, counselor outreach, fee transparency, transportation assistance, accessible materials, bridge courses, and monitoring of course completion. Students should not be excluded because adults assume they are not "college material," nor should

they be enrolled without adequate preparation.

Withdrawal, Repetition, and Academic Risk

Current Georgia guidance limits funding for repeated courses and provides consequences after multiple withdrawals. These rules protect public funds and encourage serious enrollment decisions. They also make advising important before the course begins. Students must understand that a college withdrawal may have more lasting consequences than changing a high school elective. (Georgia Student Finance Commission, n.d.-c)

Unexpected illness, family crisis, disability, or scheduling conflict can still occur. Programs need fair review processes for exceptional circumstances. Accountability should not become punishment for events beyond a student's control.

The Most Far-Reaching Effect

The most far-reaching effect is the creation of a bridge between secondary and postsecondary education. Dual enrollment changes when and where college learning can begin. It encourages schools and colleges to align curricula, communicate about readiness, and share responsibility for student progression. This effect is broader than institutional enrollment or tuition revenue. It can reshape expectations about the final years of high school, especially for students prepared for specialized or advanced work.

The bridge can succeed only if credits are meaningful and support is coordinated. Without alignment, students may collect disconnected courses, encounter conflicting calendars, or receive inconsistent advice. The program should be judged by learning, completion, equitable access, transfer value, and long-term progress rather than participation alone.

Recommendations

Students should develop an academic plan before registering and confirm how each course meets high school requirements. They should investigate transfer and degree relevance, understand the funding cap, and consider workload alongside employment, family responsibilities, and extracurricular activities. Parents should support planning without treating early college as a competition.

High schools and colleges should provide joint orientation, clear points of contact, early alerts, tutoring, accessibility support, and transparent data on completion and credit transfer. Policymakers should review patterns by student group and adjust rules when barriers or unintended incentives appear. Program information must be updated regularly because eligibility and funding rules can change.

Conclusion

Georgia's former Move On When Ready program should be understood through its current form, Dual Enrollment. It does not allow students to abandon grades eleven and twelve or enter college without requirements. Eligible students remain enrolled through a high school or home study program, gain admission to a participating institution, take approved courses, and earn both high school and college credit under funding and application rules. The program can expand advanced learning, improve college readiness, and reduce later costs, but credits may not always fit a degree and participation can be unequal. High schools and colleges must coordinate advising, standards, schedules, and support. The most significant effect is the development of a structured bridge between secondary and postsecondary education. Its success depends not on how many students "move on," but on whether they learn, retain useful credit, complete high school, and progress toward realistic educational goals.

References

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