

On the *Move*

“Exciting developments are occurring throughout the province in education and training and within our labour market. Manitoba Advanced Education and Training is pleased to provide this article which highlights a successful initiative we want to share with our stakeholders. Every few months we will be sending you a new article that will focus on a specific development that is having a positive result for Manitoba communities.”

Diane McGifford
Minister

The Dual Credit Initiative: *An Innovative Pathway to Post-Secondary Education*

Manitoba is at the forefront in developing one of the most comprehensive dual credit initiatives in Canada to facilitate easier transition between secondary and post-secondary education. High school students and learners who are working toward a high school diploma now have the opportunity to enrol in college or university first-year courses and apply the credit at both the secondary and post-secondary levels. Since introducing the dual credit initiative on a pilot basis in 2001, 712 Manitoba students have received credit for courses that were recognized by post-secondary institutions. Two-thirds of these students were enrolled in high schools; one-third were adults enrolled in adult learning centres throughout the province.

There are many benefits associated with the program. In the short term, the initiative offers students early exposure to the demands of post-secondary education, builds personal self-confidence as course requirements are completed, and provides motivation to continue education studies after the completion of high school. As the initiative unfolds over the coming years, it is expected that it will enhance students' general academic preparedness for post-secondary education, shorten the time required to complete a post-secondary program, and eliminate the need to complete comparable courses at both educational levels.

In addition to the benefits that dual credit courses can provide to students, they can also benefit the communities where the students live. Dan Reagan, regional manager of Keewatin Community College in Flin Flon, says the dual credit program can provide students with an opportunity to contribute to the community at the same time as they earn credits. For example, a group of Flin Flon high school students recently organized the ice fishing derby for an annual festival, as part of a credit in Community Recreation and Leadership. Reagan says plans are underway to introduce a Building Construction dual credit course, as well as courses in ecotourism and health care aide training.

Working together, Manitoba Education and Youth and Manitoba Advanced Education and Training introduced the Dual Credit Initiative as a pilot program in 2001. Since this time the departments have tracked its rapid progress. The table below illustrates the growth in the number of dual credit courses being offered by post-secondary institutions. Compared with 2001-02, the number of dual credit courses offered in 2002-03 almost tripled.

"We want students to come to school ready and willing to learn. The dual credits initiative allows students to design programs that can meet their own needs and interests. As a community college, we can give them credit for these projects that ultimately benefit the community."

Dan Reagan
Keewatin
Community College

Manitoba Education and Youth has also collected feedback from high school students and adult learners. While both groups were positive in their appraisal of dual credit courses, adult learners identified the greatest benefits. For example, 78% of adult learners surveyed at the Brandon Adult Learning Centre indicated a strong correlation between taking dual credit courses and the benefits they attained at the post-secondary level. Forty-seven per cent (47%) of these students stated that having a dual credit under their belt influenced their decision to move on to the next level of education. Of the Brandon students surveyed, 38% moved on to post-secondary education and an additional 37% continued at their respective adult learning centre. Adult learners also identified relevant course content and greater flexibility in planning their studies as benefits. Jeff Kerr, former director at the Brandon Adult Learning Centre (BALC) says, "BALC and Assiniboine Community College have found offering dual credits has allowed students to achieve the empowering symbol of a high school diploma, while at the same time making a smooth transition into post-secondary education."

Post-secondary institute	Number of Dual Credit Courses 2001-02	Number of Dual Credit Courses 2002-03
University of Manitoba	4	23
University of Winnipeg	6	20
Keewatin Community College	14	69
Assiniboine Community College	23	38
Red River College	2	15
Steinbach Bible College	0	1
Yellowquill College	0	1
Total	49	167

The implementation of dual credit courses is having a positive impact for a broad base of learners and educational providers in Manitoba. The dual credit initiative offers learners flexibility and choice... two very important factors that make education relevant and fulfilling.

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