



MDHSA NEWS

Early graduation from high school? Yay or Nay?

By Mary Hudzinski

It is tempting to graduate students "early" for many reasons. However, having directed the MDHSA diploma program since its inception and taught many home educated students in a variety of settings, and as the mother of 9 children of my own, there are some other considerations. Some scholarships, such as the NCAA sports scholarships and the National Merit Scholarships, are only available for students who are completing a four-year high school program. Federal funds such as the Pell grant and student loan program, as well as state scholarships are only available for the first bachelors degree or trade school program. If a student completes a bachelors degree in one discipline and discovers in the work force that this is definitely ***not*** a fit, the second bachelors program is out of his pocket entirely.

More importantly, the end of high school should be a time of exploration. Students should be given the freedom to explore interests and talents in a way that will not be available at any other time in their lives.

Many students have graduated early and gone on to college or trade school and later regretted the decision because with maturity came the wisdom to discern true interests.

And finally, 16 and 17-year-old teens mature a great deal in each successive year. Being at home, under the guidance of loving parents yet with freedom to explore and make mistakes, that maturation will

help to shape a truly capable young adult. High school graduation is seen as the transition from child to adult. Delaying that transition by a year or two allows the student to make it more gradually and with more experience to use in meeting each new challenge when living independently.

If a student has completed all of the credits required for graduation by the end of 11th grade or needs only one or two credits to graduate in 12th grade, there are other options. The student can enroll in a local college, community or 4-year school, and earn dual credit courses. Dual credit courses count both towards high school graduation (they are recorded on the high school transcript) and college (they are recorded on any subsequent college transcripts and may eliminate the need to take those courses at a later time). The courses can be geared to meeting general educational requirements, such as English or Social Studies, or can allow the student to explore areas of interest such as art, music, or literature. Keep in mind that some minimal entrance requirements will need to be met in order to qualify for some classes but entry level courses in many disciplines of study at the college level require only the completion of a college-level English composition class (English 101). If there is no interest in college immediately, independent study in any discipline is always an option. Finding people in careers of interest who can help to direct those Independent studies is also an option. Interested in veterinary science? Find a vet and ask him or her if tag-alongs on home and farm visits are a possibility! Ask the vet to recommend reading and other resources to expand research into what is required in the field. Volunteer at a local pet shelter for even more experience. Depending on how much time and effort is expended on this course of action, high school credit may be awarded.

Delaying graduation beyond the meeting of the minimal high school credit requirements of the PA Home Education law allows freedom in the final year of high school to explore possibilities for the future, gain some valuable experience, and still have the supportive help of parents close by.

