

Wildkit Way Transcript: Season 2, Episode 5

Announcer:

Welcome to the Wildkit Way, a podcast that gives the mic to Dr. Marcus Campbell, the superintendent of Evanston Township High School. Join us on this audio journey as Dr. Campbell shares his stories and insights and has honest real conversations with people who make ETHS and our community, the incredible place it is.

On this episode of The Wildkit Way, we focus on dual credit, a program at ETHS that gives Wildkits access to college level courses to help them successfully transition to higher education. ETHS Math department Chair Dale Leibforth and senior Katalin Maji join Dr. Campbell to talk about the growing program, its robust and unique courses, and why all Wildkits should take advantage of it. Let's get started.

Marcus Campbell:

Hello everybody, this is Dr. Campbell, and welcome to another Wildkit Way podcast. I'm Marcus Campbell, superintendent here at Evanston Township High School, and I am joined today this time by ETHS, senior Katalin Maji and Dale Leibforth, who is our Math Department Chair and helps us a lot with dual credit-early college. That's what we're going to be talking about today. So I'd like to welcome Dale and Katalin. Welcome.

Dale Leibforth:

Thanks for having us.

Marcus Campbell:

How's your data going today?

Dale Leibforth:

It's good. Sun shining outside, right?

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah, it's one of these warm days, so we're excited about that. So our topic today is dual credit, and so I'm going to turn to Mr. Leibforth who has historically led all of our work around AP recruitment and retention, and now we are endeavoring on yet another journey of what our students credits that our students can earn after ETHS, and this is referred to as dual credit early college. And so Dale, can you just share a little bit about what dual credit is and talk about our relationship with Oakton College.

Dale Leibforth:

Yeah, so as you said, I've been working with the Advanced Placement Program for a long time, but in the spring we met in your office, if you remember we had a brainstorming session. It was ETHS leaders and Oakton leaders. And we got together and said, what can we really do to help our students with their post-secondary plans? And one of the areas that was lifted up was the year of dual credit. We'd been doing dual credit for a long time, but not every student who was in the dual credit class was taking advantage of that opportunity. So we figured how can we make this happen? What are some of the barriers? And so in that room we talked about: how can we get communication out? How can we streamline the application process? How can we maybe get rid of the barrier of fees? We were able to work through all those, and I wrote it down here. It's 112% increase. We have over 400 unique students taking dual credit this year.

Marcus Campbell:

That's from last year to this year?

Dale Leibforth:

From last year to this year.

Marcus Campbell:

We have a 112% increase. That's great to know. But for our folks, what is dual credit?

Dale Leibforth:

Dual credit is an opportunity to take a college level class while still in high school and dual credit, the word credit, you actually can get credit at your college.

Marcus Campbell:

What kind of credit? College credit?

Dale Leibforth:

College credit, yeah, college credit.

Marcus Campbell:

So it's just like AP?

Dale Leibforth:

Just like AP. So similar, you take the AP exam, you have the opportunity to get college credit, dual credit, you have an Oakton transcript, you have the opportunity to get college credit for that as well.

Marcus Campbell:

So is there any reason why a student at ETHS wouldn't take a dual credit class? What's the downside?

Dale Leibforth:

You're giving me a softball. There's no downside. I think many of our students are there, and I think you'll probably talk about it in a little bit. I didn't even know it was a dual credit class; that happens in our AP classes sometimes. But there's no reason not to take a dual credit class. You can only get an advantage from it. And I really think that we have ETHS teachers here teaching the class. They're excited about it; they're passionate. Often the dual credit classes have straight applications to what students are interested in for the future. So it's a great opportunity to get that college experience, get that college transcript before you even leave the high school.

Marcus Campbell:

Well, that's fantastic to hear from an adult. Now let's hear from a student Katalin, who has taken quite a few courses at ETHS. Can you talk to us and maybe the listeners on what your experience has been like in dual credit, taking some dual credit courses?

Katalin Maji:

So this year I am part of the Project Lead the Way's Manufacturing, Engineering and Robotics class, which at first I did not know was a dual credit class, but I am so grateful that it is because I can earn college credit, which is really nice. And I've just been really happy learning some of these more advanced classes and also having the chance of learning what college is like, but in high school settings. And I've definitely tailored a lot of my classes throughout high school towards expanding my interests in some of the AP classes like AP chem and AP physics and calculus.

Marcus Campbell:

So you've taken a combination of both dual credit and AP courses.

Katalin Maji:

And I really like that. I do learn a lot more through AP and dual credit classes than some regular classes because they're more advanced as well. But it just really prepares me for college.

Marcus Campbell:

So you may want to tell everybody...what are you going to major in college, Katalin?

Katalin Maji:

I want to major in material science and engineering. I really like that it's so versatile and it's really broad that I can study robotics, as well. So my manufacturing robotics class definitely helps.

Marcus Campbell:

So what classes have you taken at ETHS that you think have prepared you for a major in material science and engineering?

Katalin Maji:

Definitely AP chem and AP physics and my calculus class. Definitely helped with a more STEM side with understanding the fundamentals, as well as even my AP lit class, which definitely helps me more with the more verbal and more talking part and verbalizing the technical stuff into the more English side of stuff.

Marcus Campbell:

Would you say the Project Lead the Way courses too, which are the dual credit courses have also been a part of that sequence, right?

Katalin Maji:

Definitely. If it's my geometry and instruction class, which is not dual credit, but also helps lead you to the more engineering side, which we have that opportunity here.

Marcus Campbell:

It just makes me so happy to hear that we have such a robust course offering here at ETHS: Geometry in Construction, Project Lead the Way, Robotics. All of the things that we offer...and I know that you are also interested in this AI certification program that we are partnering with dual credit. Can you share a little bit about that?

Katalin Maji:

Yeah, I'm really excited to take the AI course and learn more about AI and how it's applications in the world. Definitely with how the world is changing and AI becoming more prominent, I know that it'll impact my major and especially what I want to do in college. So it's really good to have this kind of starting base here at high school to really help lead me in my future.

Marcus Campbell:

Yeah, that's fantastic. Dale, how did that certification program come about with Oakton College?

Dale Leibforth:

Right. Well, this is special. This is special for Evanston Township High School.

Marcus Campbell:

Oh, say that again.

Dale Leibforth:

This is special. It's unique to ETHS. We're the only school that's doing this right now. Oakton was able to get a grant and what it is...is a series of four courses that they're going to offer here at ETHS. So a lot of times it's an ETHS teacher teaching a dual credit class that we talked about earlier. This is an Oakton professor coming to Evanston to teach a series of four courses. At the end of those four courses, you can get the Essential Applications of AI certificate. And I think you talked about how AI was so exciting. I mean I should head AI.

Marcus Campbell:

Our students are excited about AI. They're not afraid of AI, like most adults are.

Dale Leibforth:

Right! And so we weren't sure how many students would be interested in it; we had three students and then we put it out there. We did some kind of advertising for it, and over 60 students expressed interest initially in that.

Marcus Campbell:

And I came to that.

Dale Leibforth:

You came to that, you saw the crowd there and they were signing up on the spot.

Marcus Campbell:

On the spot for AI certification.

Dale Leibforth:

So yeah, Oakton's been incredibly collaborative. They had a grant set forth. If students make it through all four courses, they'll end up getting certification, which they can immediately use to get a job if they want to. So similar to the benefits of dual credit, they'll actually be getting college credit again. It'll have an Oakton transcript and they can use that either just to explore AI that everyone's going to be using in the future, or maybe they can use it to transfer credits to a college or university.

Marcus Campbell:

So what I think I hear you saying is that there are multiple ways that ETHS students can get credit for college credit while they're right here at ETHS, both with AP, dual credit, and now there's an AI certification program that we are partnering with Oakton College.

Dale Leibforth:

And as part of the process, I am reviewing transcripts of students who are signing up for the AI program. And when I look at the AP courses they took and the dual credit courses they took and the AI program that they're going to be involved in. You (Katalin) are a great example of that, right? It's exciting to see a student who's actually interested in engineering and we really took advantage of all those kinds of STEM fields. And now you're dipping your toes into the water of AI. I mean, I think that's a great package. And when you look at all the credits you could have towards your college or university, I mean, that's really exciting. And again, that program is unique to here. We're testing it out here and I think that's going to be in a program that continues to grow throughout the area based on our pilot.

Marcus Campbell:

Thank you for that. So Katalin, so if there are any students who are on the fence about taking a dual credit course, what advice or what would you say to them?

Katalin Maji:

Well, I know it could be quite daunting, but it's a really amazing experience getting to learn really more advanced topics and further explore interests you don't even know that you have yet in high school. And also get college credit for it and get really prepared. And it's definitely empowering to know that I am more confident with taking college classes and transitioning from high school to college knowing I've taken some of these classes and kind of know what the expectations are. And that's really grateful to know. And I know the dual credit definitely helps me prepare in other ways, like in my Women in Engineering club that I helped co-found.

Marcus Campbell:

WiSTEM. Oh, that's right.

Katalin Maji:

Women in Engineering.

Marcus Campbell:

Women in Engineering is different from WiSTEM. I'm sorry. Thank you.

Katalin Maji:

It's a branch off of WiSTEM. It's more hands-on, and we're competing in our underwater robotics right now. We're getting prepared for a competition, and I've been able to use some of the fundamentals that I've learned from my robotics class into applying it into building this robot.

Marcus Campbell:

That's awesome. So just ---because we didn't talk about it before, and we're going to wrap up really soon--but what's the difference from the student experience between AP and dual credit? What's the difference in the class?

Katalin Maji:

Dual credit is much more, it's a lot of community, so we don't have that stress of taking an AP exam.

Marcus Campbell:

An exam, yes.

Katalin Maji:

Yeah. But I love my class, I love the people. Everyone is really excited and really want to learn about further exploring their interests. It's definitely more specific if you want to explore certain interests and not just a broad STEM course or other kind of AP courses. And it's really a "no regret move." And I am so grateful that I am able to take a dual credit (course).

Marcus Campbell:

I love it. You said it's a "no regret move." I love that. So Mr. Leibforth, how can parents and families sign up for dual credit classes?

Dale Leibforth:

I was going to end with a "no regret move" quote. Dropped the mic on that, so I appreciate that. But yeah, so students already picked their courses for next year, and so moving forward you'll review the Course Request Guide. We'll have more and more courses every year. We actually have zoology coming on board. We have life science coming on board. So this is the first year that science will actually be one of our dual credits. And we have math, CTE, and fine arts. So we've had engineering, we've had the arts, we've had math; science is coming on board. So zoology, right? Zoology and life sciences. Life science. And we have this medical field that's really blowing up and many of our students are interested in it. So we have our BNAT program that will be starting and we have a space designed just for that. So students who are interested, yeah.

Marcus Campbell:

And we have a brand new health science lab and we'll be talking more about that at some point later.

Dale Leibforth:

It's probably a different podcast.

Marcus Campbell:

It's probably a different podcast.

Dale Leibforth:

That's the basic nursing assistant training. So we have a series of courses for students who are interested in that field. So moving forward, we're going to see them blow up. So what you would do in the future is look at the Course Request Guide, pick the courses, and really find something that you're interested in going after it. Now they've signed up. And so what we'll do is we'll send them communication over the summer. We'll send them communication in the fall. You'll see my face there helping you apply. Remember that from this year, apply and register. So we apply to Oakton. And by the way, I said 400 unique students. That's 400 unique students who applied...many of them their first college. Some of them were freshmen. So before they even think about college, we have them apply to college, get accepted to a college. Oakton College accepts them as college dual credit students and then they're able to do it. So we'll be there. We'll help them apply and register. And then they'll be able to get college credit if they get an A, B, or C, which most of our students do because they're excited about the classes.

Marcus Campbell:

Well, Mr. Leibforth, thank you. Katalin, thank you for such a great conversation about dual credit. And until next time, thank you all for joining us here at the Wildkit Way podcast. Go out and explore those dual credit courses and sign up for them. It's really good for families, good for students. And as Katalin said, it's a "no regret move." Thank you, everybody.

Announcer:

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