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## Hundreds of Pennsylvania High School Students Are Earning Tuition-Free College Credits Through Dual-Credit Programs Supported by Shapiro Administration Investments

*Today, the Shapiro Administration announced \$7 million in grants to 10 institutions of higher education for dual-credit programs, bringing the Administration's total investment to \$21 million.*

*Two-time grant recipient Kutztown University has already helped 80 potential future teachers start their journey to a career in education before even leaving high school.*

**Kutztown, PA** — Through historic investments in education from the Shapiro Administration, more Pennsylvania students are charting their own course to success through dual-credit programs that offer high school students the opportunity to earn college credits before graduation – at no cost to the students or their families. Today at Kutztown University, **Secretary of Education Dr. Carrie Rowe** announced \$7 million in grants to 10 institutions of higher education to build and expand programs that offer hundreds of Pennsylvania students a headstart on their college career – bringing the Shapiro Administration's total investment in the Dual Credit Innovation Grant Program to \$21 million.

Secretary Rowe joined hundreds of students, parents, and educators today to celebrate 68 students from 19 school districts who will graduate from high school this spring with college credits earned through Kutztown University's Early College Academy, a dual-credit program that is building capacity to offer tuition-free college courses to even more high school students over the next few years thanks to more than \$1.7 million in grant funding from the Shapiro Administration.

Of those 68 students, more than half earned credits that will count toward majors in education. Altogether, through the Early College Academy's first two cohorts, Kutztown University's dual-credit program has helped 80 potential future teachers start their journey to a career in education before even leaving high school.

"The first step of any journey is the hardest one, and that is especially true for young people today who are considering what to do after high school. Options are abundant, but so are the risks. Dual-credit programs remove some of that risk from the equation and replace it with opportunity for students to explore their interests and earn college credits – without taking on debt," **Secretary Rowe** said. "Programs like the Early College Academy also give communities an opportunity to build the highly skilled workforce they need to fill the jobs of the future. And it's all happening because of smart investments and innovative partnerships between K-12 schools and the higher ed sector."

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has improved education for Pennsylvanians of all ages and backgrounds, made strategic investments that uplift all Pennsylvanians, and broken down barriers to opportunity. Under the Governor's leadership, Pennsylvania has increased

funding for public education by almost \$3 billion in just three years. This includes nearly \$2 billion more for K-12 public schools, \$190 million more for Special Education, \$65 million more for Career and Technical Education, and \$52 million more for higher education.

Governor Shapiro's 2026-27 budget proposal builds on this progress for Pennsylvanians all across the Commonwealth by investing another \$7 million in dual-credit programs for high school students who want to pursue higher education. Recipients of the Dual Credit Innovation Grant must offer the dual-credit program to students at no cost. Participants in these programs do not pay tuition, fees, or any other cost of attendance such as books or study materials.

Kutztown University launched the Early College Academy in 2024 and then – [with nearly \\$950,000 in grant funding from the Shapiro Administration](#) -- expanded the dual-credit program in 2025 to serve more students overall and more students from rural communities and economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Beginning in 2026-27, students will attend class on campus two days per week, with one day delivered virtually. This hybrid structure expands access for rural districts by reducing transportation barriers while preserving meaningful on-campus engagement. Participants enroll in two college courses per semester and earn 12 transferable credits equivalent to one semester of college over one academic year.

"At KU, we see it as our obligation to seek opportunities to serve citizens of the Commonwealth, both those in our classrooms and those in schools across Pennsylvania," said **Dr. Philip Cavalier, President of Kutztown University**. "The Early College Academy dual-credit program provides us with a way to do just that, as we accelerate the post-secondary experience for students who will embark on important careers that continue to sustain the success of our communities."

Kutztown University's 2026-27 cohort of dual-credit students is even bigger with 97 students enrolled from 24 school districts in Berks, Lehigh, Montgomery and Schuylkill counties -- including 55 students on the education track.

Governor Shapiro has made it a priority to boost Pennsylvania's pipeline of highly qualified teachers through strategic investments and partnerships. For example, in March, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) [announced nearly \\$1 million in grants to 11 institutions of higher education – including Kutztown University -- to provide an accelerated pathway to certification for Special Education teachers in training.](#)

Through Governor Shapiro's advocacy and bipartisan support, Pennsylvania has also created the Student Teacher Support Program to provide a stipend to student teachers, lowering a barrier to entry into teaching for students who would otherwise struggle to afford to student teach. Starting last week, [student teachers across the Commonwealth can now apply for a \\$10,000 stipend](#) in the 2026-27 school year through the [PA Student Teacher Support Program](#). Governor Shapiro's 2026-27 budget proposal increases funding for student teacher stipends by \$5 million, bringing total support to \$35 million annually.

After many years of decline in the number of new highly qualified teachers ready to enter Pennsylvania classrooms, since the 2021-22 school year, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) [has seen a steady increase in the number of Instructional 1 certificates issued every year](#). Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, PDE has issued more than 25,000 teacher certifications.

With its \$816,914 grant from the Shapiro Administration announced today, Kutztown University will expand the Early College Academy to offer a Health Sciences track to prepare students for postsecondary education and in-demand careers.

"The PA Dual Credit Innovation Grant under Governor Shapiro allows us to turn possibility into reality for students and families by removing financial barriers and opening clear pathways to college," said **Dr. Rebecca West Burns, Dean of Kutztown University's College of Education**. "Kutztown University's Early College Academy shows how strong partnerships with our K-12 districts enable public universities to innovate at scale – creating supported, intentional routes to college success that students can see and families can trust."

Through the Shapiro Administration's second round of funding for the Dual Credit Innovation Grant Program, the following institutions have been awarded grants to support dual-credit programs for two years starting this summer.

Allegheny County:

- Community College of Allegheny County, \$347,834

Berks County:

- Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, \$816,914
- Reading Area Community College, \$1 million

Butler County:

- Butler County Community College, \$347,834

Indiana County:

- Indiana University of Pennsylvania, \$349,511

Lancaster County:

- Millersville University of Pennsylvania, \$736,000
- Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology, \$1 million

Lehigh County:

- Lehigh Carbon Community College, \$1 million

Luzerne County:

- Luzerne County Community College, \$1 million

Northampton County:

- Northampton Community College, \$401,907

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Education, [please visit the website](#) or follow PDE on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), or [Pinterest](#).

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