

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Colorado students with disabilities have several options, both through traditional concurrent enrollment and the ASCENT program through which they can participate in college-level coursework while in high school.

In 2009, the Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 09-1319 and Senate Bill 09-285, the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act. Concurrent Enrollment is defined as the simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student with a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, including academic or career and technical education courses, which may include coursework related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs, at an institution of higher education. The program intends to broaden access to and improve the quality of concurrent enrollment programs, improve coordination between institutions of secondary education and institutions of higher education, and ensure financial transparency and accountability. In addition to coordinating and clarifying the existing concurrent enrollment programs, the bill also creates the "5th year" Accelerating Students through Concurrent ENrollmentT (ASCENT) program for students to continue participating in concurrent enrollment for one year following their 12th-grade year. In 2021, the Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (TREP) program was created for students interested in becoming educators to continue participating in concurrent enrollment for up to two years following their 12th-grade year.

Students with disabilities have the right to access any program offered by the school district if they meet all the same eligibility requirements and prerequisites for enrollment. Students with disabilities are held to the same financial obligations, academic performance expectations, and consequences for both success and failure as all other students. In addition, the services stated in a student's Individualized Education Program, 504, or any other formalized plan continue to apply.

Most options for students with disabilities require advanced planning, so early conversations and decisions are critical. This information should be used in collaboration with the high school counselor, special education providers, parents, and, most importantly, the student, to generate conversation during the transition planning process for students with disabilities. Concurrent Enrollment considerations should align with the student's identified post-secondary goals and address any necessary accommodations or services.

If under State law, attending classes at a postsecondary institution, whether auditing or for credit, is considered secondary school education for students in grade 12 or below and the education provided meets applicable State standards, those services can be designated as transition services on a student's IEP and paid for with IDEA Part B funds consistent with the student's entitlement to FAPE (free and appropriate public education). Dual enrollment can be a helpful option for students in facilitating their transition from secondary school to postsecondary education and the workforce (*A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment For Students And Youth With Disabilities*).

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Concurrent enrollment, as well as any other early college opportunities, should align with the student's identified postsecondary goals on both their Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) as well as address any necessary accommodations or services. The goals and plans should be developed in collaboration with the high school counselor, special education providers, parents, and, most importantly, the student.

Traditional Concurrent Enrollment

For students who are in their first four years of high school, college credit hours earned concurrently must apply to high school graduation requirements as defined in the student's academic plan. Students are not statutorily limited to the number of allowable credit hours per semester or per year. Districts may not establish limitations on allowable credit hours per student.

ASCENT

Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) is a fifth-year high school program that allows students to participate in concurrent enrollment the year after 12th grade. Qualified students who have completed at least nine credit hours of postsecondary courses before completion of his/her 12th-grade year may be eligible for the ASCENT Program. Students who participate in ASCENT are still considered high school students. They remain students in their district for one year following their 12th-grade year, and the district receives ASCENT-specific per-pupil state funding that it uses to pay their college tuition at the resident community college rate. Students receive their high-school diplomas at the end of their ASCENT year. For ASCENT, additional transition services may be provided during the student's ASCENT year and beyond, however, after the transition student's ASCENT year, the student may NOT enroll in any additional concurrent enrollment courses as part of their transition services.

Teacher Recruitment Education and Preparation (TREP)

The TREP program was created by SB 21-185. The TREP program creates the opportunity for qualified students in an educator career pathway to concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses and earn college credit at no tuition costs to them or their families, for up to two years after the 12th grade year. Additional costs, such as textbooks, fees, and transportation, are not required by the district to cover, though some do. Qualified students who have completed one course in the **Educator Pathway** during their 12th-grade year may be eligible to participate. See more [eligibility requirements](#). Students who participate in TREP are still considered high school students. They remain students in their district for two years following their 12th-grade year, and the district receives TREP-specific per-pupil state funding that it uses to pay their college tuition at the resident community college rate. Students receive their diplomas following the completion of their two years in the TREP program. For TREP, additional transition services may be provided during the student's two TREP years and beyond, however, after the transition student's TREP years, the student may NOT enroll in any additional concurrent enrollment courses as part of their transition services.

5th Year and Beyond Students - Non-ASCENT/TREP

For students retained past their fourth year of high school, they would not have met the district's minimum graduation requirements. Districts must ensure that all college credit hours earned concurrently apply toward the student's high school graduation requirements as defined in the student's academic plan. If concurrent courses are not required for the student to meet high school graduation requirements, the course will not be included in the calculation of funding eligibility. Students in their fifth year and beyond may not concurrently enroll in more than nine credit hours during the academic year (including basic school courses) with a maximum of six credits per semester as a full-time student and three credits per semester as a part-time student in any subsequent years while registered as a K-12 student.

Transition Students

Transition students between the ages of 18-21 who have an IEP that encompasses the pupil enrollment count date are eligible to participate in Concurrent Enrollment, ASCENT, and TREP; however, they must meet the same [programmatic and funding requirements](#) as all other Concurrently Enrolled/ASCENT/TREP students. For Concurrent Enrollment, these students would need to meet the requirements for a 5th-year and beyond student.

Could a student participate in ASCENT or TREP after one year of 18-21 services?

No. Since ASCENT is a fifth-year program, a student must participate in ASCENT in the fifth year only. The fifth year is determined by the student's Anticipated Year of Graduation (AYG). TREP is a 5th and 6th-year program, which is also determined by AYG. For a student to participate in the 6th year of TREP, they need to have participated in the 5th year in the year prior.

ASCENT/TREP and 18-21 services can occur simultaneously, but only in the fifth year for ASCENT and the 5th and 6th year for TREP. For ASCENT/TREP, additional transition services may be provided during the student's ASCENT/TREP year(s) and beyond; however, after the transition student's ASCENT/TREP year(s), the student may NOT enroll in any additional concurrent enrollment courses as part of their transition services.

How is ASCENT/TREP funded? For clarification, do per pupil revenue (PPR) or IDEA/ECEA funds pay for the ASCENT/TREP year(s)? Each district sets its internal budget for its schools, programs, etc. Per-pupil revenue is considered general funds and is not subject to specific uses.

The Colorado Department of Education uses data reported in the Student October Count data submission to determine each district's Total Program funding as described in the Public-School Finance Act of 1994 (as amended), which includes the funded pupil counts and per pupil revenue (PPR).

The funded pupil counts for each district include all students receiving educational services from the district, including students receiving transition services, ASCENT, TREP, etc. When the district receives the state share of its total program funding each month from the State, this funding is allocated to the district's general fund which is then used and budgeted at the district's discretion. As such, the district sets its budgets for the various programming and educational services it delivers to its students.

As described in the Student October Audit Resource Guide, the district must have supporting documentation for funding eligibility for any student included in the district's funded pupil count as reported in Student October. If a student is reported as Transition or as participating in ASCENT (for example) in the Student October Count data submission, the district must be prepared to provide documentation to support reported funding eligibility (full-time, part-time, or not eligible) for the student as described in the Guide. For example, a district must be able to provide evidence that it paid the full tuition amount for any concurrent enrollment course the student was scheduled in during the fall semester is used to determine the student's funding eligibility as reported in the data submission for ASCENT students in the district. If the district is unable to provide that evidence at the time of the audit, the district's funded pupil count will be adjusted and may result in a decrease in funding.

ACCOMMODATIONS

It is important to understand the differences between high school and college-level coursework and available accommodations at the postsecondary level. Students with disabilities who meet the prerequisites of a course may be provided with reasonable accommodations in a college course that allows equal access. If the student needs additional accommodations that are not provided through the IEP, they will apply through the college's disability services office. There are accommodations available under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act. However, colleges will not provide changes to the course content or performance expectations that would substantially alter the course's essential elements. Not all accommodations available at the high school level will be allowed in college-level classes.

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More information about Concurrent Enrollment, ASCENT and TREP can be found at [Postsecondary/Concurrent Enrollment](#).

General information about Concurrent Enrollment or ASCENT for students and parents can be found at [Concurrent Enrollment](#).

More information about the funding requirements related to Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT can be found in the [Student October Audit Resource Guide](#).

More information from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) can be found in [A Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment for Students and Youth with Disabilities](#).

More information on other postsecondary options for Students and Youth with Disabilities can be found in [Increasing Postsecondary Opportunities and Success for Students and Youth with Disabilities](#).

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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