

HB 09-1319 and SB09-285 Fact Sheet:
The Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act of 2009

Creating pathways between high schools and institutions of higher education is essential to fulfill the Colorado Promise of doubling the number of postsecondary degrees earned by Coloradoans and reducing by half the number of students who drop out of high school in the state. “Concurrent enrollment” means a student is simultaneously enrolled in a local education provider and in an institute of higher education or career and technical courses. Concurrent enrollment programs have existed for many years in Colorado, yet due to a lack of state-wide coordination, organization or support, access to concurrent enrollment programs has been limited.

In May 2009, Colorado State Legislature passed HB09-1319 and SB09-285 (hereafter the “Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act” or CRS 22-35-101 et seq). The collective intent is 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. Beyond coordinating and clarifying the existing concurrent enrollment programs, the bill also creates the “5th year” ASCENT program for students retained by the high school for instruction beyond the senior year.

Key policy implications for districts:

- Districts can begin implementing during the 2009-2010 school year and by year 2012, high schools must operate all concurrent enrollment programs under the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act.
- To create a concurrent enrollment opportunity, districts must first enter into a cooperative agreement with a “qualified” institution of higher education.
- Districts are required to reimburse concurrent courses at the in-state (“resident”) community college tuition rate and all concurrently enrolled students will be classified as Colorado residents for tuition setting purposes.
- Students may concurrently enroll into any career and technical education course, certificate program, community college course and traditional college course, if the institution of higher education meets the following qualifications:
 - Is accredited by a regional accrediting agency or association;
 - Provides an educational program for awarding a bachelor’s degree or a graduate degree;
 - Is authorized by the Department of Higher Education to do business in Colorado;
 - Maintains a physical campus or instructional facility;
 - Determined by the United States Department of Education to be eligible to administer federal financial aid (i.e., “Title IV eligible”).
- Students in 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades may qualify to concurrently enroll in postsecondary courses if the student has:
 - Has received approval for their academic plan of study;
 - Applied for concurrent enrollment approval no later than sixty day before the end of the academic term that immediately precedes the intended term of concurrent enrollment;
 - Met the minimum prerequisites for the course (students need not meet all Higher Education Admission Requirements [HEAR]);

- 12th grade students who have not satisfied minimum high school graduation requirements established by his or her high school by the end of his or her 12th grade year may *not* concurrently enroll into more than 9 credit hours (including basic skills courses) in any subsequent years while registered as a K-12 student.

What districts need to know now about the Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment (ASCENT) Program

Beginning in the 2010-11 school year, districts can participate in the ASCENT program. The ASCENT program permits eligible students to participate in a “5th year” of high school while enrolled concurrently. Districts with ASCENT students will receive a fixed amount of “per-pupil operating revenue.” ASCENT program participants shall not be considered a high school graduate until he or she has completed his or her participation in the ASCENT program and any remaining graduation requirements.

To participate in the ASCENT program, districts complete the following:

- In fall 2009, and each fall thereafter, submit to the Colorado Department of Education a list of current 12th graders who will be eligible for the ASCENT program during the upcoming school year, i.e. current seniors (2009-10 school year) who plan to remain enrolled at the high school in order to participate in a dual degree or 5th year program (in the 2010-11 school year). Districts should:
 - Submit a separate list of current 12th grade students who are in their 5th year; this should not be included in the same list for next year’s 5th year students.
 - Indicate how many of the current 5th year students are part time and how many are full time.
- Enter into a cooperative agreement with a qualified institution of higher education (see definition on the previous page).
- Ensure that all college credit hours earned concurrently apply toward the students’ high school graduation requirements as defined in the students’ academic plan.

To participate in the program, students must meet the following qualifications:

- Have completed or is on schedule to complete at least 12 credit hours (semester hours or equivalent) of postsecondary course work prior to the completion of his or her 12th grade year;
- Is not in need of basic skills coursework as defined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education’s (CCHE) remedial education policy;
- Have been selected for participation in the ASCENT program by his or her high school principal or equivalent school administrator;
- Have satisfied the minimum prerequisites for the course before his or her enrollment in the course; and
- Have not participated in the ASCENT program in previous years.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Misti Ruthven, Secondary Service Initiatives, at 303.866.6206 or ruthven_m@cde.state.co.us