

## Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT Frequently Asked Questions

Updated 1/25/11

### General

***Q: Are districts required to implement an ASCENT program? Concurrent Enrollment?***

A: There are no statutory requirements to implement an ASCENT program, a Concurrent Enrollment program, or sign a cooperative agreement. Districts are only required to follow the ASCENT guidelines if they choose to participate in a 5<sup>th</sup> year Concurrent Enrollment program after 2012. Should districts choose to participate in ASCENT, names of interested and eligible students must be provided to the Colorado Department of Education by September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year for students to be considered for the following academic year.

***Q: When are districts able to fully implement the ASCENT program?***

A: The first group will be eligible to participate in fall 2010.

***Q: What is the difference between concurrent enrollment and ASCENT?***

A: Concurrent enrollment is open to students in 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade. Tuition for approved course(s) is paid through per pupil operating revenue funding. ASCENT a 5<sup>th</sup> year program for students that have completed or are on schedule to complete at least 12 credit hours (semester hours equivalent) of postsecondary course work prior to the completion of his or her 12<sup>th</sup> grade year.

***Q: Can districts mix and match Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) and Concurrent Enrollment or must they choose only one?***

A: Districts have the option to use pieces of both programs until July 1, 2012; however, there would have to be two different cooperative agreements in place, one for each program. Beginning fall 2012, districts will have to use Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT program criteria as Postsecondary Enrollment Options will no longer be available.

***Q: What is the difference between extended studies and Concurrent Enrollment?***

A: Concurrent Enrollment is a type of dual enrollment program, which allows students to receive college credit before high school graduation. Concurrent enrollment programs (current and previous) include and/or previously included the Postsecondary Enrollment Options program; the Fast College Fast Jobs program; the High School Fast Track program; Concurrent Enrollment (replaces PSEO and Fast Track no later than 2012) and the ASCENT program. The ASCENT and Concurrent Enrollment programs require the school district to pay the tuition of participating students up to the community college tuition rate. Funding to school districts will occur as outlined in the legislation and rules.

Extended studies dual enrollment programs are off campus programs offered through a contract between the school district and four year institutions. These programs are generally cash funded and do not carry College Opportunity Fund eligibility. Additionally, these programs are authorized through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education policies and rules pursuant to Section 23-1-109 C.R.S. (2009).

***Q: Can this model be used for alternative programs for adult education?***

A: This model is for high school students who are less than twenty-one years of age and are enrolled in the ninth grade or a higher grade level a local education provider and the model is not applicable to any other population of student.

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**Funding/Tuition**

***Q: Are books and fees included in the funding for these programs?***

A: The legislation declares that funding for books and fees is not included; however, the school district may choose to sponsor such expenses, and it is recommended that those expenses be addressed in the cooperative agreement.

***Q: For what amount of tuition are students eligible?***

A: If a student goes somewhere other than the local community college, the student would only be eligible for the amount of tuition at the local community college tuition rate. The payment of any tuition charged above the community college rate should be addressed in the cooperative agreement and made clear to the student during the registration process!

***Q: How will funding be determined with the potential for requests for ASCENT student participation that exceed state allocation?***

A: The ASCENT advisory board will help CDE with the selection for ASCENT participation in the event of limited funds. Districts will then allocate received slots according to their own methodology.

***Q: Are students in ASCENT or Concurrent Enrollment programs eligible to receive College Opportunity Fund?***

A: Yes, students participating in Concurrent Enrollment programs are eligible to receive payment of stipends from the College Opportunity Fund program.

***Q: Does the Concurrent Enrollment program impact a school district's per pupil funding?***

A: No, participating Concurrent Enrollment students shall be included in the funded pupil count of his or her school district, or, in the case of a student enrolled in an institute charter school, the school's accounting district.

***Q: What happens to funding if a student drops out of ASCENT or drops to part time?***

A: An ASCENT program participant who is enrolled in at least twelve credit hours of higher education courses as of October 1 of the budget year will be considered a full-time pupil. If a student drops below full-time status the district will return the difference through the end of the year audit from the Colorado Department of Education.

***Q: Can Perkins or Colorado Technical Act monies be used for tuition?***

A: Perkins funds may not be used by secondary or postsecondary recipients for individual student tuition for Concurrent Enrollment or ASCENT. Local school districts eligible to receive Colorado Technical Act (CTA) funds may claim tuition and FTE for Concurrent Enrollment for Career & Technical Education (CTE) within an approved postsecondary CTE program in their final CTA report for reimbursement as a contract expense. Due to the fact that districts receive separate funds for ASCENT students, ASCENT tuition is not a CTA claimable expense.

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## **Eligibility**

***Q: Are students who take remedial courses covered under Concurrent Enrollment guidelines?***

A: Yes, the legislation states that students in their senior year are eligible to take remedial courses under a Concurrent Enrollment program. The district reserves the right to determine if students will be approved to take remedial courses under Concurrent Enrollment.

***Q: Are students who take remedial courses eligible for ASCENT?***

A: Eligible seniors may take remedial courses, but remedial coursework does not qualify as part of the 12 credit hours of college coursework required for ASCENT eligibility.

***Q: Can all high school students participate in the ASCENT program?***

A: Yes, all students may participate if they meet the requirements for the ASCENT program and funding is available.

***Q: What happens if a course is full?***

A: The student may enroll in another course as long as that course is aligned with the goals of the ICAP and the student meets all requirements for entry into the course. Prior to changing enrollment status the student should be in contact with their academic advisor.

***Q: Is there a transition period for students that allows for students who do not yet have 12 credits to participate in the ASCENT program?***

A: No, the legislation is clear about the 12 credit hour requirement.

***Q: Does the Accuplacer exam have to be taken prior to enrollment?***

A: The legislation does not require a specific postsecondary test; however, a qualified student who intends to concurrently enroll in a postsecondary course, including an academic or a career and technical education course, must satisfy the minimum prerequisites for the course prior to his or her enrollment in the course. In order to demonstrate meeting pre-requisites the institution of higher education may require testing or other means to demonstrate preparedness.

***Q: How does an institution of higher education determine that the student is qualified?***

A: The institutions of higher education will utilize existing procedures and or those in the cooperative agreement to determine if a student is qualified.

***Q: Does an ASCENT student have to meet the graduation requirements to participate?***

A: Yes. Per selection criteria guidelines established by the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board, an ASCENT participant will have to meet all graduation requirements in addition to having 12 credit hours on the college transcript, not be in need of any basic skills courses, and must be admitted to the institution of higher education.

***Q: Do certificates count as degree programs for the ICAP and ASCENT program?***

A: Yes.

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**Agreements**

***Q: Does a cooperative agreement need to be in place for ASCENT participation?***

A: Yes. A cooperative agreement must be in place between the school district and the college for ASCENT program participation. This agreement must be made separate from the Concurrent Enrollment cooperative agreement.

***Q: Are there separate agreements for Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT?***

A: Yes. Both preferred agreement models can be found on the CDE website. ([http://www.cde.state.co.us/SecondaryInitiatives/CE\\_index.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/SecondaryInitiatives/CE_index.htm))

***Q: How do service areas of the community college work? Can a high school make an agreement with a community college outside of the service area it is in?***

A: A cooperative agreement that crosses over service area boundaries may not be signed unless the community colleges have a service area exemption agreement in place. Service area agreements must be signed by both community college presidents and must be processed through the Colorado Community College System.

***Q: Can an Institution of Higher Education participate in multiple agreements?***

A: Yes. There is not a limit to the number of cooperative agreements that an IHE may sign.

***Q: If a college course is taught at the high school by a high school teacher, can students participate in the ASCENT program with this course?***

A: Yes, this is allowed, but it would have to be specified in the cooperative agreement that such courses are acceptable.

***Q: Is there a disclosure in the cooperative agreement form that declares that information can be released to high school and parent?***

A: For the purposes of meeting the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the student is considered a high school student until they reach the age of 18. At that point rights transfer to the student. However, if the 18 year old is a dependent for federal income tax purposes, the parent is also entitled to access the student education records.

***Q: Can districts send students to either a two-year or four-year institution?***

A: Yes, a cooperative agreement can be signed between a local education provider and a two-year or a four-year institution of higher education. Local education providers may enter into multiple cooperative agreements.

***Q: Is a school district limited to enter into an agreement with only one college or community college for enrollment of students?***

A: No, it is permissible for school districts to have multiple agreements. However, colleges that are part of the Colorado Community College System are not allowed to serve districts outside of the college's defined service area unless there is a Service Area Clearance Agreement in place.

***Q: Can a stipend be provided for teachers in the high school by the IHE?***

A: Yes, as long as this is addressed in the cooperative agreement and is in compliance with existing party regulations

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## **District Concerns**

***Q: Are students considered high school graduates after they have met graduation requirements, even if they continue into the 5<sup>th</sup> year with the ASCENT program?***

A: No, a student who is designated as an ASCENT program participant 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 specified by his or her high school administration.

***Q: Can districts choose to only allow juniors and seniors to participate in the Concurrent Enrollment Program?***

A: The district has flexibility in implementing the Concurrent Enrollment Program to best meet the needs of students in their district.

***Q: What will be the impact of graduation for AYP and other district accountability requirements?***

A: Students in five-year programs will not be counted as graduates in the four-year, on-time graduation rate. However, they will be included in the five-year graduation rate if diplomas are obtained the following school year. Information regarding students who are still enrolled is provided to districts to explain how they continue to service students who have not yet completed their high school education.

***Q: What is the process to determine if funding is available for ASCENT?***

A: Funding for the ASCENT program must be submitted to the legislature as a part of its annual budget request. Since this is the case, requests for ASCENT participation must be provided to Charles Dukes (dukes\_c@cde.state.co.us) at CDE by September 1st the year prior to participation. By June 1, the State Board of Education will determine and report how many qualified students the department may designate as ASCENT students.

***Q: Should the district release SASID information to the institutions of higher education?***

Yes, in order for a student to enroll into Concurrent Enrollment or the ASCENT program the student must complete an enrollment form which includes authorization of consent the Qualified Student and parent or legal guardian for the Local Education Provider to release the State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) to the Institution of Higher Education. Please see the Rules for Administration of the Concurrent Enrollment Program 1 CCR 301-86 201 (2)(vii).

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## **Other**

***Q: How will compliance with the Individual with Disabilities Act be addressed in concurrent enrollment programs?***

A: Please see Frequently Asked Questions for Students with Disabilities on the Colorado Department of Education website:

[www.cde.state.co.us/SecondaryInitiatives/CE\\_index.htm](http://www.cde.state.co.us/SecondaryInitiatives/CE_index.htm).

***Q: Is there a minimum number of credit hours in which a student must enroll during their participation in the ASCENT program year?***

A: ASCENT program participant will be classified as either full time or part time. This classification will be based on the college's credit hour policy. Allocation of funds to the school district will be based on the status of the student.

Keep in mind that the ASCENT program should be used for those students that have the goal of attaining a college credential. It is encouraged that the participants enroll in as many courses as they can successfully complete in order to get closer to reaching their goal.

***Q: In the 5<sup>th</sup> year, is there any limit in the number of credits that a student can take?***

A: If a student is taking classes during the 5<sup>th</sup> year through ASCENT, there are no limits to the numbers of credit hours a student can take unless otherwise restricted per a college's maximum credit policy. However, if a student was retained for a 5<sup>th</sup> year due to not meeting graduation requirements, the student is limited to 9 credits total during his/her 5<sup>th</sup> year, with a maximum of 6 credits allowed in one semester.

***Q: Does the approved plan of study in the Concurrent Enrollment program have to have a certificate/degree built in?***

A: The Concurrent Enrollment legislation does not require a certificate or degree be included in a student's Individual Career and Academic Plan by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year.

***Q: Will Concurrent Enrollment credits be included in the student's College Opportunity Fund tally?***

A: Yes, with the exception of basic skills courses.

***Q: Do basic skills courses taken as Concurrent Enrollment count against the credit hour limit for COF?***

A: Remedial courses are COF eligible but are not counted against the lifetime credit hour limit.

***Q: Can online college courses be used for these programs?***

A: Yes; however, online learning and course delivery is not the right learning environment for all students. Please research and understand the limitations and best practices of online learning prior to including this method in the cooperative agreement.

***Q: Do online courses have the same tuition cap as in person courses?***

A: The Community College online tuition rate is established as the tuition maximum for any online Concurrent Enrollment or ASCENT course. This tuition rate should be stipulated in the cooperative agreement.

***Q: If an IHE charges more than the CC rate, can the institution receive COF on behalf of that student?***

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