Colorado Department of Education
FAST FACTS
EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT SERVICES UNIT
Transition Planning Issues
Fall 2010

# Dual Enrollment Options and Students with Disabilities

Many students with disabilities have plans and aspirations of attending college or career and technical education after high school. Creating pathways between high school and college is essential in meeting the needs of students with disabilities who may require supports and accommodations to successfully transition to a postsecondary setting.

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to jump-start their college career and provide an on-ramp that eases the student into postsecondary level work. In Colorado, legislation has recently been passed with the intent to broaden access to and improve the quality of dual enrollment programs, improve coordination, and ensure financial transparency and accountability. In particular, House Bill 09-1319 and Senate Bill 09-285 (the "Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act" or CRS §22-35-101 *et seq*) clarify the term "concurrent enrollment" to mean an eligible student is simultaneously enrolled with a Local Education Provider (school district or charter school) and also with a qualified Institution of Higher Education or career and technical course.

Students with disabilities have the right to access any program offered by the school district as long as they meet all of 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.

Although students with disabilities may have access to dual enrollment programs, there are many factors to consider in determining if a dual enrollment program is best for a specific student. Factors that must be considered include:

- short-term and long-term funding options;
- how courses fit in the student's career and academic plan; and,
- accommodations and services available to the student.

Most options require advanced planning, so early conversations and decisions are critical. This information should be used in collaboration with the high school guidance counselor, special education providers, parents, and, most importantly, the student, to generate conversation during the transition planning process for students with disabilities.

### *Self-Advocacy*

*Many postsecondary disability services coordinators claim that absolutely the <u>most important thing</u> that a student with disabilities can do is be a strong self-advocate, someone who speaks or writes in support of himself or herself. Many students have had strong parent involvement in high school but will now be expected to take responsibility for their own needs and learning.*

## Definitions

**Dual Enrollment** is the generic term for a program allowing a student to be enrolled in two separate institutions at the same time, such as taking college classes while still enrolled in high school. It may also refer to an individual who is participating in two related programs at the same time, such as the high school and the career tech program within the district.

**Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act**, passed by the Colorado State Legislature as HB09-1319 and SB09-285, as described in C.R.S. §22-35-101, phases out previous concurrent enrollment programs of Fast Track, Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), and Fast College Fast Jobs, and implements the new ASCENT "5th year" program. By July 1, 2012 all concurrent enrollment is required to meet these parameters.

**Concurrent Enrollment** is a type of dual enrollment program that is explicitly defined in statute and provides the opportunity for students to earn high school and college credit at the same time. Open to students in 9th-12th grade, tuition for approved courses is paid by the district. Credits earned are deducted from the student's life time College Opportunity Fund account.

**College Opportunity Fund (COF)** is a trust fund which provides a stipend for each eligible undergraduate student in Colorado who applies for the stipend and registers to attend a state or participating private Institution of Higher Education.

**ASCENT** is a 5th year program for the student who has completed or is on schedule to complete at least 12 credit hours of postsecondary course work by the end of his or her 12th grade year. The student will continue for an additional year to earn high school and college credit for courses completed satisfactorily. The student is not counted as a high school graduate until completion of the 5th year.

**Extended Studies** is a higher education term that denotes off campus instruction offered by four year public colleges in Colorado. These courses may look similar to concurrent enrollment courses, but they are administered through the statewide extended studies policies authorized through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) policies and rules pursuant to C.R.S. 23-1-109, and they will not be eligible for COF. Courses may provide high school as well as college credit based on an agreement between the school district and four year institution. College credits earned are recorded on the official college transcript. In many cases tuition will be paid for by the student or parent but may be subsidized by the district. One example of an extended studies program is *CU Succeed*.

**18-21 Transition Services** are based on individually designed services for students with disabilities who need specific supports beyond the typical senior year to link with postsecondary systems. Services are identified through the IEP process and are intended to assist students in bridging high school and postsecondary services. Students may be taking classes for credit, auditing classes, or participating in transition classes housed on the college campus and participating in campus life.

**Third Party Educator/Program** is a contractual agreement between a district and a third party to provide educational and/or transition services to their students. A third party program/educator does not have a school or district code and is not a private or parochial school, a public agency (e.g., Head Start), a school district, an approved facility school, BOCES or BOCES educational program. Examples include a program on a higher education campus, an-district GED program, or a contract for services with a non-profit or for-profit agency such as Goodwill Industries, etc.

## *Accommodations*

*It is important to understand the differences between high school and college level course work and the accommodations that are available at the postsecondary level. College credit earned through a concurrent enrollment option becomes part of the student's college transcript and is transferable to other Colorado colleges. For that reason, a course taken for college credit must maintain the integrity and rigor of college level work regardless of where the class is taught.*

*Students with disabilities who meet the prerequesites of a course may be provided reasonable accommodations that allow equal access, basically to level the playing field. However, colleges will not provide modifications to change the course content or performance expectations that would substantially alter the essential elements of the course. Students need to understand that not all accommodations available at the high school will be allowed in college level classes.*

### Are concurrent enrollment options available in every school or district?

No. Concurrent enrollment opportunities are dependent upon a cooperative agreement between the school district and the college. There are no statutory requirements for a district to enter into an agreement or offer accelerated learning options.

### How does an institution of higher education determine that the student is qualified for admission?

The institutions of higher education will utilize existing procedures and/or those in the cooperative agreement to determine if a student is qualified. Administrative approval is required at the high school level before a student can register for a class through concurrent enrollment.

### Are the rules different if the class is held at the high school?

No. If the class is for college credit, the same rules apply regardless of the location of the class.

### Does the Accuplacer exam have to be taken prior to enrollment?

The legislation does not require a specific test; however, a student who intends to concurrently enroll in a postsecondary course must satisfy the minimum prerequisites for the course prior to enrollment. The institution may require testing or other means to demonstrate preparedness.

### Do the accommodations listed in the student's IEP automatically apply to college classes?

No. It is important to remember that the IEP does not continue to college or the workplace. Some accommodations provided at the high school may also be appropriate at the college level. However, at the high school there may be supports and services provided that go beyond reasonable accommodation and would not be appropriate at the college level.

### Does the IEP team make decisions about accommodations provided in college classes?

No. Although the IEP team plays a key role in providing recommendations and documentation for requested accommodations, decisions about the accommodations provided in college classes will be determined by the college.

### How will compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) be addressed in concurrent enrollment programs?

Concurrent enrollment courses (college) are only covered by 504/ADAA. Participation in a concurrent enrollment course is considered to be a choice on the part of the student. Therefore, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements concerning a free appropriate public education (FAPE) do not apply. Furthermore, since requirements under the IDEA do not apply to the postsecondary level, services described in the IEP would not be required for concurrent enrollment courses. However, because the student is still considered a high school student, and is continuing to earn high school credit, IEP services could be provided in other ways. See the Case Example below.

### What is the process for obtaining accommodations in concurrent enrollment courses?

The student must:

- apply to the office of Disability Services at the college to self-identify disability;
- request accommodations; and,
- provide the necessary documentation.

It may be appropriate for the special education teacher to assist the student in this process as a transition service.

### If a student is eligible for interpreter services or text in alternate format, does the college provide these services or the high school?

The college is responsible for providing any accommodations for the college class. However, there may be good reason for the college and the school district to collaborate on some services. For example, the interpreter assigned to the student during the school day may also work with the student during the concurrent enrollment course. Or, a student using assistive technology for high school work may use the same software and equipment for the concurrent enrollment class. To avoid confusion, roles and responsibilities related to specific accommodations should be clearly defined in the concurrent enrollment agreement developed between the school, the student and the parent.

### Is a student with disabilities held to the same grade requirements as other students?

Yes. Students with disabilities are held to the same standards of academic and behavioral performance. Access to accommodations does not guarantee success.

### If the student does not complete the concurrent enrollment class with a passing grade, what are the consequences?

The student may be responsible for reimbursing the district for tuition costs; the grade received will appear on both the official high school and college transcripts; and the forfeited credit for the course could mean that the student is lacking credit for high school graduation.

**Can a student participate in *concurrent enrollment by auditing a* class?**

No. Concurrent enrollment applies only to classes that are taken for college credit.

**My son is participating in an 18-21 year old program. Do the concurrent enrollment requirements apply?**

No. Concurrent enrollment is only available for students enrolled in 9th-12th grade. Educational services provided to students beyond the typical senior year are individually designed as part of the students' comprehensive transition plan. Opportunities for students with disabilities to take college classes or participate in campus life after 12th grade would be outside of the concurrent enrollment legislation and would require separate agreements.

**For a student receiving 18-21 year old services, what factors should be considered to determine participation in a postsecondary setting?**

Transition teams should consider:

- if the student will take courses for college credit;
- if the intent is participation in the college experience;
- what part of the student's plan will be met by participation on the college campus; and
- what other transition services are needed in order to meet postsecondary goals.

In general, services would be designed to meet the needs of the individual student based on IEP goals. One student may take a couple of classes on the college campus with support from the district transition coordinator in order to bridge to the postsecondary setting while the district transition staff may use the college campus as the environment to practice access and independent living skills for another student.

## Accelerated Learning Opportunities by Grade Level

| | 9th grade | 10th grade | 11th grade | 12th grade | Post 12th 1st year | Post 12th 2nd year | Post 12th 3rd year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Concurrent Enrollment | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... Limited Options | | |
| ASCENT | | | | | ..... | | |
| Extended Studies | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | ..... | | |
| 18-21 yr old services | | | | | ..... | ..... | ..... |

## Case Example #1

Sara has been identified with a Specific Learning Disability affecting reading and writing skills. She also experiences anxiety attacks and feels overwhelmed when faced with large or complex tasks.

Sara would like to participate in a concurrent enrollment math course being offered at the high school. In order to receive the necessary accommodations for her reading and writing disability, Sara will meet with the Disability Services Coordinator at the college to discuss her learning needs. Sara has worked with her special education teacher to gather the documentation necessary to verify her need for the requested accommodations. The Disability Services Coordinator approved Sara for use of a note taker and she will be allowed to take her tests in the testing center with assistance in reading the instructions.

Although her special education teacher will not work directly with the instructor of the college class, he will work with Sara on study skills, organization, and test taking strategies during her high school resource class period. Sara will also meet periodically with the district social worker to develop and practice strategies to deal with anxiety.

As the course progresses, Sara will need to communicate directly with the instructor, the Disability Services Coordinator, and her special education teacher if she is having difficulty or needs assistance. Per her IEP, Sara's special education teacher and social worker will practice self-advocacy skills with her.

cde Since Sara is considered to be a college student for this course, it would not be appropriate for her parents to contact the college instructor or the disability services coordinator. They should continue to meet with Sara's special education teacher and the district administrator responsible for concurrent enrollment and work through them if there are concerns related to her high school or concurrent enrollment courses.

## Case Example #2

Matt is receiving services through the school district 18-21 program. Matt spends two days per week on the college campus and works half-days three days per week.

Matt is auditing one college class, Health and Wellness. He is able to participate in this class independently with minimal accommodations. Matt also participates in two district transition classes; Communication Skills and Money Management, taught by the district special education teacher on the college campus. Matt is receiving bus training services and learning to ride RTD. All classes and services are paid for by the district as part of Matt's transition services and the full amount of time is included for October Count purposes.

Matt is receiving employment services through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, School to Work Alliance Program on the days that he is not at the college. By the time Matt is ready to exit the school district, he will have learned how to access classes of interest through adult education and the recreation center and to use the bus system.

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