

Instruction

Advanced Courses or Programs, Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment

Purpose

The Board of Education (Board) believes in the basic principle that academic rigor and the opportunity to accelerate learning are powerful motivators for students to meet intellectual challenges and excel in the academic environment. The Board supports advanced courses and programs that promote academic acceleration. All students at the high school level will be provided an opportunity to participate in a rigorous and academically challenging curriculum.

The Board encourages students to pursue rigorous, challenging academic coursework such as, but not limited to, honors classes, dual enrollment, dual credit, advanced placement classes, International Baccalaureate courses, and the Cambridge International Program.

The Board, to encourage student participation in advanced courses or programs, will communicate information about advanced courses or programs to students and parents; offer district-wide counseling to students about the benefits of advanced level courses and programs; and annually report on District progress toward increasing students' readiness and participation for advanced courses or programs. The benefits of advanced coursework opportunities are not limited to one particular model.

Definitions

An “**advanced course or program**” is defined as an honors class, advanced placement class, International Baccalaureate program, Cambridge International Program, dual enrollment, dual credit, early college or any other advanced or accelerated course or program offered by the Board of Education in grades 9-12, inclusive.

“**Prior academic performance**” means the course or courses that a student has taken, the grades received for each course, and a student's grade point average.

Procedures/Criteria/Guiding Principles

The following District and school-level principles will contribute to fostering greater equity in student participation in advanced courses or programs:

1. Provide a Program of Studies that outlines courses available and course sequence that makes later advanced coursework a viable option;
2. Create multiple access points to advanced courses and programs, allowing students to access these programs at various points of their high-school experience;

P6141.51(b)

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Procedures/Criteria/Guiding Principles (continued)

3. Use only enrollment access criteria that are educationally necessary;
4. Use multiple methods by which a student may satisfy eligibility criteria for enrollment, including but not limited to:
 - a. Recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors, or other school personnel;
 - b. Criteria not exclusively based on a student's prior academic performance;
 - c. Use of a student's prior academic performance must rely on evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in an advanced course or program;
 - d. GPA improvement over time;
 - e. Scoring near benchmark on local assessments;
 - f. Student interests and persistence.
5. Offer a robust set of student supports, which may include tutoring, access to technology, and support from school counselors, that help all students succeed in advanced courses or programs; and
6. Publish and disseminate materials that encourage all students to participate in advanced courses and programs and provide opportunity for electronic translation.

This equitable course enrollment policy is based on rigorous learning opportunities for all students in elementary and middle grades. High school students willing to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum shall be admitted to an advanced course or program as defined in this policy.

District administrators and school counselors shall advise students and parents/guardians of the opportunity to participate in advanced courses or programs as defined in this policy. When students' success plans are prepared and revised, the academic component shall include appropriate preparatory courses and advanced course and program participation. Staff shall also encourage students to take challenging courses.

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Procedures/Criteria/Guiding Principles (continued)

The Board seeks an equitable course enrollment policy that limits prerequisites and entrance requirements to those that are directly related to a student's potential for success so that no single measure excludes their participation.

Advanced courses or programs must comply with applicable District policies and state standards and this policy must be in accordance with SDE promulgated guidance.

The Superintendent or his/her designee shall ensure the development and/or identification of program stipulations, eligibility criteria, student attendance and/or identification of procedures for students encountering difficulty and/or wishing to drop advanced courses.

Evaluation

The Superintendent or designee will review annually data on student participation in advanced courses or programs, the data shall be disaggregated by race, gender, English learner, and Special education. Such data will be used during the planning process for course and program offerings in the upcoming school year.

- (cf. 6141.4 – Independent Study)
- (cf. 6141.5 – Advanced College Placement)
- (cf. 6172.1 – Gifted and Talented Students)
- (6141.52 – Challenging Curriculum Policy)
- (cf. 6141.7 – Honors Programs)
- (cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 P.A. 21-199 Section 3
 10-221r Advanced placement course program. Guidelines.
 District Guidance for Developing an Advanced Course Participation Policy

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Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

The Board of Education (Board) believes academically advanced courses and/or programs are designed to motivate students to understand rigorous content. The Board recognizes its responsibility to identify these students in grades 8 and 9, in compliance with Section 5 of P.A. 21-199, and to provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services. Any student who is capable of and wishes to do advanced course work or take an accelerated course or program, as detailed in this policy should be permitted to do so in grades 9-12

An “**advanced course or program**” as defined in this policy means an honors class, advanced placement class, International Baccalaureate Program, Cambridge International Program, dual enrollment, dual credit, early college or any other advanced or accelerated course or program offered by the Board. Such courses or programs are specifically designed to extend, enrich, and/or accelerate the standard school program in order to meet the needs of District students.

The Board’s goal is to create a culture of deliberate excellence through its commitment to all students who have the capability, potential, or motivation to access advanced academic curriculum and instruction. The Board desires to nurture potential in all students and to challenge students with advanced capabilities through differentiation and responsive instruction. The needs of advanced and high potential learners will be equitably addressed across all populations.

In compliance with Section 5 of P.A. 21-199, the Board adopts this “challenging curriculum policy” aligned with State Department of Education (SDE) guidance. This policy includes, as required, the criteria for the identification of students in grades 8 and 9 who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program, as defined, and that such identified students have an academic plan. Priority placement will be given to students identified as gifted, as per policy #6172.1, “Gifted and Talented Students.”

Criteria

For purposes of this policy, the focus is on students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the District and who would benefit from advanced courses or programs in order to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.

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Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

Criteria (continued)

The Superintendent or his/her designee will develop procedures for an ongoing identification process that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity or a specific academic area. The identification process shall include consideration of all students including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans. Students may be found within any socially defined group such as: racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; gender; English learners; and within populations of students with disabilities.

Identification Process

Identification is a multistep process, which shall consist of screening and referral, assessment of eligibility and placement/enrollment.

The Superintendent or his/her designee will develop and document appropriate curricular and instructional modifications and/or programs for such identified students, in grades 8 and 9, indicating content, process, products and learning environments.

The criteria for students in grades 8 and 9 shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- Superior cognitive ability;
- Accelerated academic ability in one or more of the following content areas; math, science, language arts, social studies
- Creative thinking ability; and
- Giftedness

Detailed information will be made available on the District website regarding this policy and the procedures used to identify students who would benefit from enrollment in advanced courses or programs, and the required academic plan.

Academic Plan

Each identified student shall develop an academic plan from grade 8 or 9 through grade 12. The plan, developed with the assistance of parents/guardians and with the advice and recommendations of school personnel, shall be reviewed annually. The plan is to include a list of courses and learning activities/programs in which the student will engage while working toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements.

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Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

Academic Plan (Continued)

Each identified student shall develop an academic plan from grade 8 or 9 through grade 12. The plan, developed with the assistance of parents/guardians and with the advice and recommendations of school personnel, shall be reviewed annually. The plan is to include a list of courses and learning activities/programs in which the student will engage while working toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements.

The student's academic plan must be designed to enroll the identified student in one or more advanced courses or programs and allow the student to earn high school and college credit or result in career readiness.

The academic plan must be aligned with the following:

1. the courses or programs currently offered by the Board of Education;
2. the student success plan;
3. the high school graduation requirements established in state law; and
4. any other Board-adopted policies or standards relating to student enrollment eligibility for advanced courses or programs.

A student or his or her parent/guardian have the right to decline the implementation of the provisions of the academic plan.

(cf. 6141.4 – Independent Study)

(cf. 6141.5 – Advanced College Placement)

(cf. 6141.51 – Advanced Courses or Programs-Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment)

(cf. 6141.7 – Honors Programs)

(cf. 6172.1 – Gifted and Talented Students)

(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 P.A. 21-199 Section 5
 10-221r Advanced placement course program. Guidelines.
 District Guidance for Developing an Advanced Course Participation Policy

P6148(a)

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FAFSA Completion Program

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes that college, for many students, continues to be an important pathway that helps to provide students with the necessary skills for work and for lifelong learning. In addition, research has indicated the students who complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are more likely to attend college with financial aid.

Many Connecticut students, eligible for college, fail to complete the FAFSA each year, resulting in the loss of funds that could help support their postsecondary education.

The Board acknowledges that Connecticut has, for eligible school districts, implemented a FAFSA Completion Challenge (Challenge). This Challenge is based on the premise that FAFSA completion is strongly associated with postsecondary enrollment and outcomes. Students who complete the FAFSA, in greater numbers, attend college directly from high school in comparison to non-completers.

Note: The statewide FAFSA Challenge is a partnership between the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Connecticut College and Career Readiness Alliance. This partnership aims to strengthen postsecondary access and enrollment by raising FAFSA completion rates among high school seniors.

Therefore, the Board, through this policy, sets as a goal a District initiative to improve the completion rates for FAFSA among grade 12 students and students in District adult education programs. This goal aims to strengthen District efforts to improve postsecondary enrollment and student outcomes and to make it easier for students to attend postsecondary education.

The Superintendent and/or designee will initiate new strategies to increase yearly student FAFSA completion rates. The Board may accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind donations, to implement this policy.

As a currently SDE designated alliance district, the Board will add to the list of goals that it includes in its application to the Commissioner of Education for alliance district funds the goal of implementing its policy to improve FAFSA completion rates by grade 12 and for adult education students.

As required, the Board will publish and make available on the District website the annual FAFSA student completion rate for the graduating class of each high school within the District.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

P. A. 21-199 An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Statutes Relating to Education and Workforce Development, Sect. 6, 7, 8.

Policy adopted:

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Gifted and Talented Students Program

The Board of Education (Board) recognizes its responsibility to identify gifted and talented students within the school district. The Board is committed to providing identification and assessment which is responsive to students' economic conditions, gender, developmental differences, disabling conditions and cultural diversity.

For purposes of this policy, "gifted and talented students" means a child identified by the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) as (A) possessing demonstrated or potential abilities that give evidence of very superior intellectual, creative or specific academic capability and (B) needing differentiated instruction or services beyond those being provided in the general education program in order to realize the child's intellectual, creative or specific academic potential. The term shall include children with extraordinary learning ability and children with outstanding talent in the creative arts.

For purposes of this policy "outstanding talent in the creative arts" means a child identified by the Planning and Placement Team as gifted and talented on the basis of demonstrated or potential achievement in music, the visual arts or the performing arts.

Although not required by law, the school district may provide educational programs for the gifted and talented, within budgetary constraints, that include a broad spectrum of learning experiences which increase knowledge and develop skills necessary for the student to function successfully in society while encouraging students to excel in areas of special competence and interest.

The Superintendent or his/her designee will develop procedures for an ongoing process for gifted and talented students that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity or a specific academic area.

The identification methodology will include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans (IEP) or 504 Plans, be developmentally appropriate, non-discriminatory, and related to the programs and services offered by the District.

The final determination in the identification of students as gifted and/or talented must be done by a PPT. Such PPT charged with this responsibility shall be composed of a group of certified or licensed professionals representing each of the teaching, administrative and pupil personnel staff.

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Gifted and Talented Students Program

Upon the identification of a student as gifted and talented, the District shall provide electronic notice of such identification to the parent/guardian of such student. Such notice shall include, but need not be limited to:

1. an explanation of how such student was identified as gifted and/or talented;
2. the contact information for the District's employee in charge of the provision of services to gifted and talented students, or, if there is no such employee, the District's employee in charge of the provision of special education and related services;
3. the employee at the State Department of Education who has been designated as responsible for providing information and assistance to Boards of Education and parents or guardians of students related to gifted and talented students, pursuant to section 10-3e of the General Statutes; and
4. any associations in the state that provide support to gifted and talented students.

The school district, should it decide to offer services to the gifted and talented, shall utilize the guidelines, developed and promulgated by the State Department of Education (SDE), for providing services to those students. The guidelines include best practices for the district to consider for (1) addressing the intellectual, social and emotional needs of gifted and talented students in schools and (2) providing teacher training and professional development on gifted and talented students.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-76a-(e) Definitions.
 10-76d-(e) Duties and powers of Boards of Education to provide special
 education programs and services.
 Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies Sections 10-76a-1–10-76l-1.
 P.A. 19-184 An Act Concerning the Provision of Special Education.
 Gifted and Talented Education: Guidance Regarding Identification and
 Service. SDE Guidance, March 2019.
 P.A. 21-199 An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the
 Statutes Relating to Education and Workforce Development, Section 2.

Policy adopted: