

## CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 09-1319 and Senate Bill 09-285, the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act. The act created the concurrent enrollment program, defined as the simultaneous enrollment of a qualified student in a local education provider and in one or more postsecondary courses, including academic or career and technical education courses, which may include course work related to apprenticeship programs or internship programs, at an institution of higher education. 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" Accelerating Students through Concurrent ENrollmentT (ASCENT) program for students to continue participating in concurrent enrollment for one year following their 12th grade year.

Students who participate in ASCENT are still considered high school students. 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 (IEP), 504, or any other formalized plan continues 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 guidance 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 Postsecondary Goals as well as address any necessary accommodations or services.

### CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT

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#### **9th Through 12th Grade Students**

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 students' 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.

#### **5th Year and Beyond Students - Non-ASCENT**

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 students' 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 5th year and beyond may not concurrently enroll into 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.



## ASCENT

ASCENT stands for Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment. Students who have completed at least 12 credit hours of postsecondary course prior to completion of his/her 12th grade year may be eligible for the ASCENT Program. 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.

## Transition Students

Transition students (those between the ages of 18-21 who have an IEP that encompasses the pupil enrollment count date) are eligible to participate in Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT, however, they must meet the same programmatic and funding requirements as all other Concurrently Enrolled/ASCENT students. For Concurrent Enrollment, these students would need to meet the requirements for a 5th year and beyond student. For ASCENT, additional transition services may be provided during the student's ASCENT year and beyond, however at the completion of the transition student's ASCENT year, the student may NOT enroll in any additional concurrent enrollment courses as part of their transition services.

[More information about Concurrent Enrollment or ASCENT can be found here.](#)

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

[More information about the funding requirements related to Concurrent Enrollment and ASCENT can be found here.](#)

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## 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. Students with disabilities who meet the prerequisites of a course may be provided reasonable accommodations that allow equal access. 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?**

**Yes.** Statute requires local education providers to offer concurrent enrollment options to their eligible students.

### **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 for participation different if the class is held at the high school?**

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

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

**No.** 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.

**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.

The IEP may be used to document the student's disability. 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 upon approval. However, there may be good reason for the college and the school district to collaborate on some services. 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.

**Can a student audit a class at an institution of higher education?**

**Yes.** This would not be considered Concurrent Enrollment as only classes that are taken for both high school and college credit are considered Concurrent Enrollment. To determine funding eligibility, such a class would follow the requirements of contractual education services as outlined in the Student October Count Audit Resource Guide.

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

Requirements under the IDEA concerning a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) do not apply at the postsecondary level. Postsecondary students are covered under Section 504 of the American with Disabilities Act. Concurrent enrollment students will apply for accommodations through the disability services office. However, school districts remain responsible for providing services as outlined in a student's IEP. IEP teams may need to amend service provision to fit student's needs and placement.

**What is the difference between a 504 plan and an IEP?** Although both plans provide accommodations, only an IEP provides for specialized instruction for students in grades K-12, while a 504 plan can serve students at both the K-12 and college level.

**What is the district's obligation to students who are enrolled in ASCENT?**

- To make a continuous and systematic effort to identify, locate, and evaluate students ages 3-21 who need special education services.
- To provide services as outlined within the IEP (virtually or in person).

**Should a district automatically exit a student from special education services and put a student on a 504 plan?**

**No.** This decision should be decided case-by-case and may only be determined following a re-evaluation and team decision.

*This COE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects COE'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.*