Instruction

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 coursework or take an accelerated course or program, as detailed in this policy, should be permitted to do so (in grades 8 and 9).

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 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."

District middle schools will offer advanced academic classes in world language and mathematics.

Students taking high school credit courses in the middle school are required to meet all expectations for earning course credit applicable to meeting high school graduation requirements.

Criteria

For purposes of this policy, these are 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.

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.

The purposes of identification are to find students who display characteristics that make them eligible for the taking of advanced courses or programs, as defined; to assess the aptitudes, attributes, and behaviors of each student; and to evaluate each student for placement. Student aptitudes, attributes, and academic behaviors will be identified, assessed, and reviewed through a multistep, multimodal, and multidimensional identification system.

Students who experience success in advanced courses or programs typically exhibit the following characteristics: reading at or above grade level; strong study skills and self-motivation; proficient oral and written communication skills; self-discipline to plan, organize, and carry out tasks to completion; and interest and self-directedness in the particular subject.

Such students may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; within both genders; 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 is directed to 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 identification process shall include the following:

- Identification of students with:
  - Superior cognitive ability;
  - Specific academic ability in one or more of the following content areas: math, science, language arts, social studies (consistently received grades of "B" or higher in the core content areas);
  - Creative thinking ability; and

    - Giftedness.
- Teacher recommendations/referrals
- Referrals from parents, students
- Placement tests, if available
- Parental approval

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 for the period from grade 8 through high school. 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's 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 has the right to decline the implementation of the provisions of the academic plan.

The academic plan enables a student to take a deeper look into what the high school years and beyond will look like. The student needs to be honest about himself/herself and consider their interests, strengths, likes, dislikes, as well as who they aspire to be as an individual. The plan should be updated as necessary and, at a minimum, at least once a year.

Beginning in the middle school years, students must be counseled on opportunities for beginning postsecondary education before high school graduation. Such opportunities include access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge courses or college-level courses for degree credit. Wherever possible, students shall be encouraged and offered opportunities to take college courses simultaneously for high school graduation and college

degree credit (dual enrollment) upon approval of the Principal prior to such participation, and the willingness of the college to accept the student for admission to the course or courses.

(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

Policy adopted: 2/25/26