



Dual Enrollment Programs

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Dual enrollment refers to programs that allow high school students to enroll in postsecondary courses. This *issue brief* provides an overview of dual enrollment programs in Colorado, including concurrent enrollment, the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-tech) and early college models, the Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment Program (ASCENT), and other programs offered by individual school districts, charter schools, or boards of cooperative educational services (known as local education providers, or LEPs).

Concurrent Enrollment

Overview. Concurrent enrollment is defined as simultaneous enrollment in high school and postsecondary courses. Only programs meeting the requirements in the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act are considered concurrent enrollment, although LEPs and institutions may establish other dual enrollment programs.

Cooperative agreements. To offer concurrent enrollment, an LEP must enter into a cooperative agreement with an institution of higher education. The agreement must include a negotiated tuition rate, the amount of academic credit to be granted, and a requirement that an academic plan of study be developed for each participating student. Cooperative agreements must be submitted to the Department of Higher Education (DHE), and if career and technical education courses are included, to the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

Courses. Postsecondary courses that qualify as concurrent enrollment include academic courses, career and technical education programs,

apprenticeships, or internships offered by an institution of higher education. Courses must qualify as basic skills credit or apply to a credit or degree program in order to be considered concurrent enrollment.

Concurrent enrollment is limited to no more than three credit hours of postsecondary courses per semester for full-time high school students and six credit hours of postsecondary credit per semester for part-time high school students. To participate, students must apply and be approved by the LEP.

Funding. Tuition for concurrent enrollment courses is negotiated through the cooperative agreement and paid to the institution of higher education by the LEP. The LEP receives the same per-pupil funding for students who are concurrently enrolled as it does for a student enrolled only in high school courses. In FY 2017-18, districts received an average of \$7,662 per student.

State law includes some limits on the cost of concurrent enrollment, and allows institutions to charge additional fees. In addition, the institution may receive the College Opportunity Fund (COF) stipend for concurrently enrolled students and include the student in their full-time equivalent student count.

Early Colleges

Early colleges, also called early college high schools, are concurrent enrollment programs that offer a curriculum intended to allow students to earn a high school diploma while also earning either an associate's degree or 60 postsecondary

credits in four years. Early colleges must be designated as such by the State Board of Education. There are currently 20 early colleges in Colorado. As with other concurrent enrollment programs, the LEP receives per-pupil funding for students who are concurrently enrolled, and institutions receive funding for students who are eligible for the COF stipend.

ASCENT

Overview. The ASCENT program allows a specified number of eligible students to enroll in postsecondary courses during a fifth year of high school. Students receive their high school diploma at the end of their fifth year.

Eligible students. To be eligible for ASCENT, students must have completed 12 credit hours of postsecondary courses prior to completing 12th grade, have completed an academic plan, be accepted into a degree program, not need any additional basic skills courses, and be selected by their school administrator. The General Assembly determines the total number of ASCENT slots statewide for a given year; in FY 2017-18, 600 slots were funded. Slots are distributed to LEPs by the Concurrent Enrollment Advisory Board and State Board of Education.

Courses. ASCENT students may only enroll in an approved career and technical education program, a pathway that includes an internship or apprenticeship, or in courses that are guaranteed to transfer to another institution of higher education. A student may enroll in courses that are not guaranteed to transfer if a parent and student sign a form acknowledging that the credit does not transfer.

Funding. School districts receive a specific amount of base per-pupil funding for students in their fifth year of high school. In FY 2017-18, this amount was \$7,894 per student. Students must apply for the COF stipend and cannot receive federal financial aid.

P-Tech Schools

Overview. Although not technically part of the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act, P-tech

schools are six-year high schools that include the traditional four years of high school and two years of postsecondary courses. Students graduate with a high school diploma and an associate's degree in a science, technology, engineering or math field.

P-tech schools are created through a partnership between an LEP, an institution of higher education, and a local industry employer. Proposals for P-tech schools must be approved by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) and DHE. There are currently three approved P-tech schools.

Funding. School districts receive per-pupil funding for each student enrolled in a P-tech school, depending on whether the student is in his or her first four or last two years at the school. Students enrolled in a P-tech schools are eligible for the COF stipend.

Other Dual Enrollment Programs

Individual LEPs or institutions of higher education may also offer their own dual enrollment programs, or individual students may enroll in postsecondary courses while in high school. The cost to students and families, course options, and transferability of the courses varies.

Participation in Dual Enrollment

Table 1 details the most recent data available related to participation in the dual enrollment programs discussed above. During the 2016-17 school year, 174 of 178 school districts offered at least one type of dual enrollment program.

**Table 1. Dual Enrollment Participation
2016-17 School Year**

Program Type	Students
Concurrent Enrollment	25,680
Early College	3,338
ASCENT	463
P-Tech Schools*	199
Other Dual Enrollment	12,177
Total	41,857

Source: Colorado Department of Education; Joint Budget Committee Staff.

* FY 2017-18 data