DUAL CREDIT OPTIONS (EARLY ACCESS PROGRAMS) IN COLORADO

WHAT ARE DUAL CREDIT OPTIONS?

Colorado students have a wide variety of opportunities to earn college level credit or further enhance their preparation for postsecondary study while in high school. These programs go by many names and it may take a little research, but participating in dual credit options (also known as concurrent enrollment or early access programs) can be extremely rewarding.

Your first step is to ask your guidance counselor or career/technical educator about program options available in your school and district that are appropriate for you.

TYPES OF PROGRAMS

Concurrent Enrollment

Colorado concurrent enrollment programs allow high school students to earn college credit by taking college level courses, either at their high school, at a college campus or online, starting in the 9th grade.

Thanks to passage of House Bill 1319 and Senate Bill 285 in 2009, access to dual credit programs has been vastly expanded. Beginning in the 9th grade, students who demonstrate the ability to take college level courses may take these courses during their high school years. Opportunities include career and technical courses as well.

HB09-1319 created the ASCENT program; Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment. This program permits students to earn both a high school diploma and college certificate or associates degree over a five year period.

New concurrent enrollment options will take the place of existing programs, which will be phased out in 2012 including:

- **College Now** – Several school districts have created concurrent enrollment programs with names such as College Now; these are typically school-based programs equivalent to early college or middle college;

- **Advanced Credit Pathways** – Career technical courses taken in high school which count towards technical certificates or associates degrees in professional and technical fields;

- **Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), Fast Tracks (FT) or Fast College/Fast Jobs (FC/FJ)** – These Colorado programs allow students to earn college credit by completing community college courses while still in high school. PSEO and FT are open to juniors and seniors in participating high schools; FC/FJ is limited to certain qualifying schools and requires students to commit to rigorous coursework throughout their high school career. Participating students are required to demonstrate ability to take college level courses.

Many, though not all, of these courses qualify for both associates and bachelor’s degrees. While Colorado has a guaranteed transfer of credit system that requires public four-year colleges to honor some credits earned at community colleges, **students should double-check** that credit for the courses taken will transfer to the four-year college of their choice.
Early and Middle Colleges

Early and Middle Colleges are a type of alternative high school which, through partnerships with institutions of higher education, enable students to earn technical certificates or associates degrees (or a specified number of college credits) while working toward their high school diploma. Some programs take 5 years. An example of this type of school is [Southwest Early College](http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/ExtendedStudies).

**Institutional Extended Studies**

Institutional extended studies programs, such as the University of Colorado [CU Succeeds Program](http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/ExtendedStudies), are offered exclusively through four-year colleges. Also see [http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/ExtendedStudies](http://highered.colorado.gov/Academics/ExtendedStudies).

Many, though not all, of the courses taken through these programs qualify toward an associates or bachelor’s degree. While Colorado has a guaranteed transfer of credit system that requires public four-year colleges to honor some credits earned through concurrent enrollment and extended studies programs, **students should double-check** that credit for the courses taken will transfer to the four-year college of their choice.

**Accelerated / Rigorous Coursework**

- **Advanced Placement (AP)** – While the [College Board](http://www.collegeboard.org) provides oversight for this program of study, courses are offered by high schools and taught by high school teachers. The courses offered are standardized and testing is administered in May of each year. Students attaining grades of 3.0 or better (on a 5.0 scale) may earn college-level course credit at the college where they enroll.

- **International Baccalaureate (IB)** – The [IB programme](http://www.ibo.org) is a comprehensive two-year curriculum offered at some high schools in Colorado. Students who earn an IB diploma may receive college credit.

*Students taking AP or IB courses should double-check the credit-granting policies of colleges where they wish to attend.*

**Basic Skills or Remediation**

Many students each year graduate from high school but enter college unprepared for college-level coursework. These students, generally those who score below the 17-19 range on the ACT, will be required to take basic skills or remedial coursework (frequently referred to as 030, 060, 090 courses).

Waiting until college to take these courses can be costly because you must pay for the course even though you will not receive credit toward your college degree. Therefore it is highly advisable to take all necessary remedial coursework while still in high school. Check with your school guidance counselor on these opportunities.

The new concurrent enrollment rules provide for taking college remedial courses while in high school.
PAYING FOR THESE PROGRAMS

Since high schools and colleges are funded from a variety of sources funding for concurrent enrollment and other programs can be very complicated. However, there are many experts prepared to help you! Make sure to ask your guidance counselor whether you will have to pay any costs for these programs.

Concurrent Enrollment

In general, current concurrent enrollment courses are paid for by the student, the school district and the College Opportunity Fund stipend, or some combination of these.

- **School District Payment** – School districts that enter into PSEO, FT and FC/FJ agreements with institutions of higher education are required to pay the tuition of students who maintain a C or better grade and qualify for free or reduced lunch subsidy. The number of courses available may be limited either by law or local practice. The new concurrent enrollment laws remove most of these limitations.

- **In-State Tuition** – All Colorado public colleges classify students as either in-state or out-of-state and charge the appropriate level of tuition based on that classification. Out-of-state tuition is typically much higher than in-state. However, students pursuing their high school diploma while taking college level courses are eligible for the in-state tuition rate until the age of 21.

- **College Opportunity Fund (COF)**
  Colorado pays of portion of tuition at participating colleges for eligible Colorado residents. The COF provides eligible students up to 145 credit hours of support towards their undergraduate degrees.
    - COF applies to the new concurrent enrollment laws
    - COF applies to PSEO, FastTrack and remedial courses
    - COF does not apply to Fast College/Fast Jobs
    - COF does not apply to extended studies courses
    - Students less than the age of 18 qualify for the COF portion of tuition for courses taken while in high school: however, for courses commencing after the age of eighteen, proof of legal residence must be provided
    - Credit hours for remedial courses that use the COF do not count towards the 145-hour limit
    - Credits hours for concurrent enrollment, PSEO or FT that use the COF can be excluded from the 145-hour limit at the student’s request

Early and Middle Colleges

Since these schools operate as high schools, the cost of college level courses is paid for by the school.

Institutional Extended Studies

Tuition rates for courses offered online or under the extended studies programs are negotiated between the collaborating colleges and districts; funding is determined on a school-by-school or case-by-case basis.
Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate

Supplemental costs are generally covered by the student or the school district.

One final reminder – these programs represent a wonderful opportunity for greater achievement during high school, save money and get a head start on your education after high school. Be sure to talk with your parents or legal guardian and guidance counselor about the alternatives and make sure you understand your responsibilities.