

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 Board is aware that minority students are chronically underrepresented in advanced level high school courses and programs of similar rigor. Low awareness of advanced courses and programs, insufficient preparation, and fear of social isolation prevent low-income and minority students from enrolling in such courses or programs. Further, other barriers to participation include the failure to identify students with potential, insufficient motivation and incentives on behalf of teachers and/or students, and funding.

An emphasis on equity must include a focus on increasing student's access to rigorous learning opportunities to assist all students to be prepared for success after high school. The following District and school-level principles will contribute to fostering greater equity in student participation in advanced courses or programs:

Advanced Courses or Programs, Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment**Procedures/Criteria/Guiding Principles** (continued)

1. Provide a course sequence and foundation-building in earlier grades, ensuring high expectations for all students, 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;
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.

In order to access advanced courses or programs students need to complete sufficiently difficult coursework at the middle school level. 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. Students who have successfully completed the prerequisite course work or have otherwise demonstrated mastery of the prerequisite content knowledge and have permission from the course instructor to participate will be allowed to enroll in advanced courses or programs offered by the District. The student must request the course or program through the guidance counselor.

District administrators and guidance 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. Teachers 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 Board 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