

ASCENT Program:

Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrolment

Frequently Asked Questions

What is ASCENT?

In May 2009, the Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 09-1319 and Senate Bill 09-285, the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act. 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.

This legislation also created the ASCENT program.

ASCENT stands for Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment. It is a “5th Year Program” that allows seniors to remain enrolled at the high school and take a fifth year consisting entirely of college classes, if they have met all of their high school graduation requirements and have taken 12 credit hours of college classes prior to the end of their senior year.

How would ASCENT benefit students?

By participating in this program, a student will get to take college classes for the 2016-17 school years while Poudre School District pays their college tuition (see below for tuition details). Many students finish the ASCENT Program having completed an Associate’s Degree.

How do students qualify for the program?

Students must:

- Remain enrolled at the high school for a fifth year (they do not attend classes at the high school)
- Be under the age of 21.
- Have a GPA of at least 2.0.
- Be on track to meet all high school graduation requirements by the end of their senior year.
- Have completed, or be on track to complete, at least 12 credit hours of college course work prior to the completion of the 12th grade year (AP classes do not count as they are high school classes. CU Succeed, College Ready, and Concurrent Enrollment classes count).
- Not be in need of basic skills or remedial course work as defined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education’s (CCHE) remedial education policy.
- Have satisfied the minimum prerequisites for the college courses before enrollment in the course, including having the required ACT or Accuplacer scores.
- Complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) with your high school counsel
- Apply to and be accepted into the Colorado postsecondary institution where they plan to take college classes.
- Have not participated in the ASCENT program in previous years.

Should all qualified students participate in ASCENT?

No. The following students should not participate:

- Students who want to attend college out of state their freshman year.
- Students who want to play inter-collegiate sports (NCAA) their freshman year.
- Students who will require federal financial aid (federal student loans, federal grants) to cover expenses not covered by ASCENT.

How much college tuition will Poudre School District pay?

Poudre School District will pay tuition at the local community college tuition rate. The payment of any tuition charged above the community college rate would be the responsibility of the student.

Do students have to reimburse Poudre School District for the cost of tuition?

Students who pass their classes with a grade of “C” or better do not reimburse Poudre School District for the amount of tuition paid. However, students who withdraw ‘W’ from a course after the drop/add deadline, receive an incomplete ‘I,’ or receive a failing grade ‘F’ will be required to reimburse the district for the amount of tuition paid.

Will Poudre School District pay for student’s room, board, books, supplies, and fees at the college?

No. PSD will only pay for tuition (at the community college rate). Students will be responsible for paying all other expenses.

Does participating in this program impact the amount of financial aid a student may receive?

Yes. Students are not eligible for any federal student financial aid including federal student loans and grants while participating in ASCENT. Students will qualify for federal aid after they have completed or dropped the program. Students may disqualify

themselves from certain scholarships or grants since 12 semester hours or more earned in college may cause the student to be classified as a transfer student rather than a freshman. *It is important for families to weigh all of their financial options before committing to the ASCENT program.*

If students stay enrolled at the high school for a 5th year, when will they be considered a high school graduate?

Not until students complete the 5th year ASCENT program. Their transcript will reflect the graduation date at the end of their participation in ASCENT. For example, students who enter ASCENT this fall 2016, will have as their graduation date May 2017 on their official high school transcript.

Will students be able to participate in a high school graduation?

Yes! Students will still participate in the graduation ceremony with their high school class. Students will receive a certificate stating that they are an ASCENT Candidate for that year. At the completion of the ASCENT year, they will receive their official high school diploma.

Where will students take college classes?

Students can take classes at Front Range Community College, which is the only post-secondary school that has an ASCENT agreement in place with Poudre School District.

Is there a limit to the number of credits a student can take?

If a student is taking classes during the 5th year through ASCENT, there is no limit to the maximum number of credit hours a student can take unless otherwise restricted per a college's maximum credit policy. However, Poudre School District will require a minimum number of 12 credit hours each semester to participate in ASCENT.

Are students required to participate for the entire 2016-17 school year?

No. PSD encourages students to take advantage of the financial support for the full year, but a student can stop participating any time. If a student fails two or more classes they will be dropped from the ASCENT program. Likewise, if a student withdraws from more than two classes and fail a class they will also be dropped.

Which college classes can a student take?

Students may enroll in Guarantee Transfer (GT) courses (see a FRCC Advisor for a list of approved courses) and/or Career & Technical Education (CTE) courses that apply to a specific career pathway as indicated in the student's Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). The courses must apply toward a college degree or certificate.

Can a student participate in college activities and athletics?

Students may participate in college activities and club sports, but are not eligible to participate in inter-collegiate athletics. Students who plan to play NCAA athletics should not participate in ASCENT.

Can a student live in the dorms?

Nothing prevents a student from staying in the dorms while taking college classes through ASCENT. However, the cost of room and board is not covered through the ASCENT program. Students will be responsible for covering these expenses.

Will Poudre School District provide transportation to the college?

No, a student will be responsible for providing their own transportation.

What else does a student need to know?

- Students may only participate in the ASCENT program for one academic year, from Fall through Spring.
- Summer classes are not covered under the ASCENT program.
- Students will have to apply for and use Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF).
- The grades a student receives in the college classes will appear on both their high school transcript and college transcript.
- Undocumented students can participate in ASCENT.

What do students need to do now?

If students are interested in the program, they should see their high school counselor to obtain an application. They may also contact me, Kelly Kappel; P: 970.430.3182 or kkappel@psdschools.org