

ASCENT Program

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 in high school for a fifth year consisting entirely of college classes, if they have met all of their high school graduation requirements, have taken 12 credit hours of college classes prior to the end of their senior year, and are considered college/career ready.

How would ASCENT benefit me?

By participating in this program, you will attend college while Denver Public Schools pays your college tuition.

How do I qualify for the program?

You must:

- Be under the age of 21.
- Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.0.
- Meet all high school graduation requirements by the end of your senior year.
- Have completed at least 12 transcribed college credits (courses level 100 or higher) prior to the end of your 12th grade year.
 - CLEP scores, AP scores, and IB classes do not count initially. (Passing AP and CLEP test scores, CU Succeed, and Concurrent Enrollment courses will count if transcribed at an accredited college or university)
- Be college and career ready and have earned the required ACT or Accuplacer scores.
 - ACT: 19 Math, 18 Writing, 17 Reading
 - SAT: 430 Verbal Reading, 440 Verbal Writing, 460 Math
 - Accuplacer: 85 Elementary Algebra, 95 Accuplacer Sentence Skills, 80 Reading Comprehension
- Complete a Personalized Education Plan (PEP).
- Apply to and be accepted into a Colorado postsecondary institution that has an agreement with Denver Public Schools.
- Register with the Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF)
- Remain enrolled in high school for a fifth year (you do not attend classes at the high school).
- 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 that want to attend college out of state their freshman year.
- Students that want to play inter-collegiate sports (NCAA) their freshman year.
- Students that will require federal financial aid (federal student loans, federal grants) to cover expenses not covered by ASCENT.

How much college tuition will DPS pay?

DPS will pay tuition at the local community college tuition rate.

Do I have to reimburse DPS for the cost of tuition?

Students that pass their classes with a grade of “D” or better do not reimburse DPS for the amount of tuition paid. However, students that drop a course after the college drop deadline or receive a failing grade will be required to reimburse the district for the amount of tuition paid.

Will DPS pay for my room, board, books, supplies, and fees at the college?

No. DPS will only pay tuition at the community college rate. You will be responsible for paying all other expenses.

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

Yes. Students are not eligible for any federal student financial aid including federal student loans and grants while participating in ASCENT. It is important for families to weigh all of their financial options before committing to the ASCENT program.

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

Until you complete the 5th year ASCENT program, you will still be classified as a high school student. Your high school transcript will show that you have completed your high school graduation requirements and that you are an ASCENT student for a 5th year. Once you complete or stop participating in the ASCENT program, you will receive your high school diploma and be classified as a high school graduate.

Will I be able to participate in my high school graduation?

Yes! You can still participate in the graduation ceremony with your high school class. You will receive a certificate stating that you are an ASCENT student for the upcoming school year. At the completion of your ASCENT year, you will receive your high school diploma.

Where can I enroll and participate in ASCENT?

You can take classes at any two-year community college or technical college that has an ASCENT agreement with Denver Public Schools. DPS has agreements with:

Arapahoe Community College
Community College of Aurora
Community College of Denver
Emily Griffith Technical College

Front Range Community College
Pickens Technical College
Pueblo Community College
Red Rocks Community College

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

If a student is taking classes through ASCENT, there is no limit to the maximum number of credit hours a student can take unless otherwise restricted by their college's maximum credit policy. However, Denver Public Schools require a minimum number of twelve credit hours each semester to participate in ASCENT.

Which college classes can I take?

Students may only enroll in Guarantee Transfer courses (see your counselor for a list of approved courses) and/or courses that apply to a specific career pathway as indicated in the student's Personalized Education Plan (PEP). The courses must apply toward a college degree or certificate.

Can I enroll in online courses?

Online courses are discouraged for ASCENT students. Denver Public Schools will not approve ASCENT students enrolling in online courses.

Can I complete more than one certificate program while participating in ASCENT?

Yes. Students that successfully complete one program can enroll in another program provided their career pathway on their personalized education plan aligns with additional certificate program. Approval must be granted for additional certificate program prior to enrolling in additional program.

Can I transfer schools while participating in ASCENT?

Although highly discouraged, students may elect to transfer to another participating institution. This must be approved prior to transferring to another institution.

Can I 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 I live in the dorms?

Nothing prevents you 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. You will be responsible for covering these expenses.

Will Denver Public Schools provide transportation to the college?

No, you will be responsible for providing your own transportation. However colleges might provide bus passes as part of your student fees.

What else do I need to know?

- You may only participate in the ASCENT program for one academic year.
- You will have to apply for and use Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF).
- The grades you receive in the college classes will appear on both your high school transcript and your college transcript.
- All students can participate in ASCENT.

When will I know if I am selected to participate in the ASCENT Program?

DPS will receive funding notice from the Colorado Department of Education by June 1. Students will be notified as soon as possible once funding is secured.

What do I need to do now?

If you are interested in the program, see your high school counselor right away for more information.

For additional information, please contact:

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