**Instruction**

**ADVANCED COURSE OR PROGRAM AND CHALLENGING CURRICULUM** **6141(a)**

## I. Purpose

The Board of Education believes in the 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 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, and advanced placement classes.

The District, to encourage student participation in advanced courses or programs, will communicate information about advanced courses or programs and eligibility criteria to students and parents, offer 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.

In order to access advanced courses or programs students need to complete sufficiently challenging coursework at the elementary and middle school levels. This equitable course enrollment policy is based on rigorous learning opportunities for all students in elementary and middle grades.

## II. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

An "**advanced course or program"** is defined as an honors class, advanced placement class, dual enrollment, dual credit, early college or any other advanced or accelerated course or program offered by the Board of Education.

**"Advanced placement"** program is a program authorized by the College Board that offers college-level courses and exams that students take in high school.

**"Dual credit/Dual enrollment"** courses are college courses offered by high schools in partnership with a college or university. Students taking these courses in high school are simultaneously enrolled with the partner higher education institution. Students who successfully complete a dual credit/dual enrollment course earn credit toward high school

graduation as well as college course credit that appears on a student transcript issued by a college or university.

**"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.

## III. Guiding Principles

The Board's goal is to create a culture of deliberate excellence through its commitment to all students to access advanced academic curriculum and instruction. The Board desires to nurture potential in all students and to challenge students with advanced capabilities through differentiation and responsive instruction. The needs of advanced and high potential learners will be equitability addressed across all populations.

The Board recognizes that course access and academic planning should be guided by considerations beyond traditional course eligibility criteria. The Board also recognizes the importance of reducing barriers to opportunities for advanced programs, providing a wide range of advanced courses that appeal to students with various interests, and that achievement and engagement in middle school are strong precursors to high school success.

High school students willing to accept the challenge of an advanced course or program may be admitted. Students who have successfully completed the prerequisite course work or have otherwise demonstrated mastery of the prerequisite content knowledge may enroll in advanced courses or programs offered by the District. The student must request the course or program through the school counselor.

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

A. Provide a course sequence and foundation-building in earlier grades, ensuring high expectations for all students, that makes later advanced coursework a viable option;

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B. Create multiple access points to and awareness of advanced courses and programs, allowing students to access these programs at various points of their high school experience;

C. Use only enrollment access criteria that are educationally necessary;

D. Use multiple methods by which a student may satisfy eligibility criteria for enrollment;

E. Offer a set of student supports, access to technology, and support from teachers and school counselors, that help all students succeed in advanced courses or programs;

F. Publish and disseminate materials that encourage all students to participate in advanced courses or programs.

## IV. Eligibility and Identification

Students who are capable of and willing to do advanced coursework or take an accelerated course of program, as detailed in this policy, should be permitted to do so. The District will identify students in grades eight and nine, through the academic plan, in compliance with statutory requirements, who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program. Students will be eligible to enroll in advanced courses or programs throughout their high school career, even if they are not identified as eligible in grades eight or nine.

Eligibility for enrollment in an advanced course or program may not be based exclusively on a student's prior academic performance. Multiple methods by which a student may satisfy the eligibility criteria for enrollment in an advanced course or program include, but are not limited to:

A. Recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors, or other school personnel;

B. A student's prior academic performance, as determined by evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in an advanced course or program;

C. Grade Point Average (GPA);

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D. GPA improvement over time;

E. Scoring near benchmark on local assessments;

F. Student interest and persistence.

Students who experience success in advanced courses or programs typically exhibit characteristics including, but not limited to: reading at or above grade level, strong study skills and self-motivation, proficient oral and written communication skills, self-discipline to plan, organize, and carry out tasks to completion, and interest and self-directedness in the particular subject.

Such students may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, within any nationality, within genders, and within populations of students with disabilities. The identification process may include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans.

The identification process may include the following:

A. Performance on standardized assessments;

B. Specific academic performance in one or more content areas (e.g. consistently received grades of "B" or higher in the core content areas);

C. Giftedness;

D. Teacher recommendations/referrals;

E. Referrals from parents and/or students.

**V. Academic Plan and Challenging Curriculum**

An academic plan enables a student to take a deeper look into high school and beyond. Each student needs to consider his/her interests, likes, dislikes, as well as who he/she aspires to be as an individual.

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The District will create an academic plan for each student beginning in grade eight for each student who is identified as eligible for enrollment in an advanced course or program. It will be reviewed annually with school personnel. The plan is to include a list of courses and learning activities/programs in which the student will engage while working toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements.

The academic plan will be aligned with:

A. The courses or programs currently offered by the Board of Education;

B. The student's student success plan, created pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-221a;

C. The high school graduation requirements; and

D. Any other Board adopted policies or standards relating to student enrollment eligibility for advanced courses or programs.

A student, or the student's parent or guardian, has the right to decline the implementation of the provisions of the academic plan.

The academic plan may be part of the student's success plan, required for each student by Conn. Gen. Stat. 10-221a if the student success plan's academic component intentionally focuses on advanced course and program participation.

**VI. Evaluation and Review**

The Board will annually review data on student participation in advanced courses or programs as part of the student achievement review. The data may be disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and high needs participation. Such data will be used during the planning process for course and program offerings in the upcoming school year.

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(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 § 10-221a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221w (as amended by P.A. 26-18)

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221x

P.A. 21-199 Section 3

10-221r Advanced placement course program. Guidelines.
District Guidance for Developing an Advanced Course Participation Policy

P.A. 25-99 Section 6

P.A. 26-18 An Act Concerning Dual Enrollment Programs

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