

PA 21-199 Section 5—Challenging Curriculum Policy

(Background information for Policy Review Committee)

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~~Section 5~~ of P.A. 21-199, “An Act Concerning Various Revisions and Additions to the Statutes Relating to Education and Workforce Development,” requires each board of education to adopt a challenging curriculum policy by July 1, 2022, that aligns with State Department of Education (SDE) guidance.

The challenging curriculum policy shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

1. ~~Criteria for the identification of students in grades eight and nine who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program; and~~
2. ~~The requirement that these students have an academic plan.~~

An “~~advanced course or program~~” as defined in the legislation means 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 a local or regional board of education in grades nine to twelve, inclusive.

The academic plan must be designed to enroll the student in one or more advanced courses or programs and allow the student to earn college credit or result in career readiness.

Furthermore, the academic plan must be aligned with the following:

1. ~~the courses or programs currently offered by the board of education;~~
2. ~~the student’s student success plan;~~
3. ~~the high school graduation requirements established in state law; and~~
4. ~~any other board-adopted policies or standards relating to student enrollment eligibility for advanced courses or programs.~~

The Act allows a student or his or her parent/guardian to decline to implement the academic plan’s provisions.

Policy Implications

This section of the Act is closely aligned with the provisions of Section 3 of P.A. 21-199. Section 3 of this legislation requires boards of education to adopt a policy or revise an existing one, also not later than July 1, 2022, concerning the eligibility criteria for student enrollment in an advanced course or program. The policy, according to the legislation, shall provide for multiple methods by which a student may satisfy the eligibility criteria for enrollment in an advanced course or program, including, but not limited to, recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors or other school personnel.

~~As used in section 3 of the Act, effective July 1, 2021, “advanced course or program” means 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 a local or regional board of education in grades nine to twelve, inclusive. The definition is the same for Section 5.~~

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~~Any policy adopted or revised and implemented under section 5 of P.L. 21-199, similar to section 3, is required to be in accordance with guidance provided by the State Department of Education (SDE).~~

~~A new policy, #6141.51, “Advanced Courses or Programs Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment,” has been developed regarding the requirements of section 3 of this legislation. That policy becomes a new mandated policy beginning with the 2022-2023 school year. That policy refers to enrollment criteria for advanced courses or programs offered by a school district in grades 9 through 12.~~

~~Section 5 of the Act speaks to criteria for the identification of students in grades eight and nine who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program. A new “challenging curriculum policy” has been developed, and follows for your consideration.~~

~~Policy #6141.52 is a mandated policy beginning with the 2022-2023 school year.~~

April 2022

A mandated policy beginning in the 2022-2023 school year to consider.

Instruction

Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

The Board of Education (Board) believes academically advanced courses and/or programs are designed to motivate students to understand rigorous content. The Board recognizes its responsibility to identify these students in grades 8 and 9, in compliance with Section 5 of P.A. 21-199, and to provide them with appropriate instructional adaptations and services. Any student who is capable of and wishes to do advanced course work or take an accelerated course or program, as detailed in this policy should be permitted to do so (in grades 8 and 9).

An “**advanced course or program**” as defined in this policy means 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. Such courses or programs are specifically designed to extend, enrich, and/or accelerate the standard school program in order to meet the needs of District students.

The Board’s goal is to create a culture of deliberate excellence through its commitment to all students who have the capability, potential, or motivation 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 equitably addressed across all populations.

In compliance with Section 5 of P.A. 21-199, the Board adopts this “challenging curriculum policy” aligned with State Department of Education (SDE) guidance. This policy includes, as required, the criteria for the identification of students in grades 8 and 9 who may be eligible to take or enroll in an advanced course or program, as defined, and that such identified students have an academic plan.

Priority placement will be given to students identified as gifted, as per policy #6172.1, “Gifted and Talented Students.”

District middle schools will offer ~~advanced academic classes~~ rigorous coursework in the four content areas of language arts, mathematics, social studies and science.

Students taking high school credit courses in the middle school are required to meet all expectations for earning course credit applicable to meeting high school graduation requirements.

Criteria

~~For purposes of this policy these are students who possess or demonstrate high levels of ability in one or more content areas when compared to their chronological peers in the District and who would benefit from advanced courses or programs in order to achieve in accordance with their capabilities.~~

Instruction

Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

Criteria (continued)

The Superintendent or his/her designee will develop procedures for an ongoing identification process that includes multiple measures in order to identify student strengths in intellectual ability, creativity or a specific academic area. The identification process shall include consideration of all students including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 Plans.

The purposes of identification are to find students who display characteristics which make them eligible for the taking of advanced courses or programs, as defined; to assess the aptitudes, attributes, and behaviors of each student; and to evaluate each student for the purposes of placement. Student aptitudes, attributes and academic behaviors will be identified, assessed and reviewed through a multistep, multimodal, and multidimensional identification system.

District and school-level principles will contribute to fostering greater equity in student participation in challenging curricula; Students who experience success in advanced courses or programs typically exhibit the following characteristics: 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.

- Provide a course sequence and foundation-building in earlier grades, ensuring high expectations for all students, that makes later challenging coursework a viable option;
- Create multiple access points to challenging curriculum and programs;
- Use multiple methods by which a student may satisfy eligibility criteria for enrollment, including but not limited to:
 - Recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors or other school personnel, including the input of students and parents/guardians
 - Criteria not exclusively based on a students' prior academic performance
 - Use of a student's prior academic performance must rely on evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in a challenging course
 - Academic improvement over time;
 - Scoring near benchmark on local assessments;
 - Identification of giftedness
 - Student interests, creative thinking ability, and persistence.

Such students may be found within any racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group; within any nationality; within both genders; and within populations of students with disabilities.

Identification Process

Identification is a multistep process, which shall consist of screening and referral, assessment of eligibility and placement/enrollment based on the eligibility criteria within this policy.

The Superintendent or his/her designee is directed to develop and document appropriate curricular and instructional modifications and/or programs for such identified students, in grades 8 and 9, indicating content, process, products and learning environments.

~~The identification process shall include the following:~~

- ~~Identification of students with:~~
 - ~~Superior cognitive ability;~~
 - ~~Specific academic ability in one or more of the following content areas; math, science, language arts, social studies (consistently received grades of “B” or higher in the core content areas);~~
 - ~~Creative thinking ability; and~~
 - ~~Giftedness.~~

Instruction

Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

Identification Process (continued)

- ~~Teacher recommendations/referrals~~
- ~~Referrals from parents, students~~
- ~~Placement tests if available~~
- ~~Parental approval~~

Detailed information will be made available on the District website regarding this policy and the procedures used to identify students who would benefit from enrollment in advanced courses or programs, and the required academic plan.

Academic Plan

Each identified student shall develop an academic plan for the period grade 8 through high school. The plan, developed with the assistance of parents/guardians and with the advice and recommendations of school personnel, shall be reviewed annually. 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 student's academic plan must be designed to enroll the identified student in one or more advanced courses or programs and allow the student to earn high school and college credit or result in career readiness.

The academic plan must be aligned with the following:

1. the courses or programs currently offered by the Board of Education;
2. the student's student success plan;
3. the high school graduation requirements established in state law; and
4. any other Board-adopted policies or standards relating to student enrollment eligibility for advanced courses or programs.

A student or his or her parent/guardian have the right to decline the implementation of the provisions of the academic plan.

The academic plan enables a student to take a deeper look into what the high school years and beyond will look like. The student needs to be honest about himself/herself and consider their interests, strengths, likes, dislikes, as well as who they aspire to be as an individual. The plan should be updated as necessary and at a minimum, at least once a year.

P6141.52(d)

Instruction

Challenging Curriculum Policy (Criteria for Identification of Eligible Grade 8, 9 Students)

Academic Plan (continued)

Beginning in the middle school years, students must be counseled on opportunities for beginning postsecondary education prior to high school graduation. Such opportunities include access to Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate, or Cambridge courses or college-level courses for degree credit. Wherever possible, students shall be encouraged and offered opportunities to take college courses simultaneously for high school graduation and college degree credit (dual enrollment) upon approval of the Principal prior to such participation, the willingness of the college to accept the student for admission to the course or courses.

(cf. 6141.4 – Independent Study)

(cf. 6141.5 – Advanced College Placement)

(cf. 6141.51 – Advanced Courses or Programs-Eligibility Criteria for Enrollment)

(cf. 6172.1 – Gifted and Talented Students)

(cf. 6172.6 – Virtual/Online Courses)

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

P.A. 21-199 Section 5

10-221r Advanced placement course program. Guidelines.

District Guidance for Developing an Advanced Course Participation Policy

Policy adopted:
cps 4/22