



College Acceleration

Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

What do we mean by “college acceleration?”

College acceleration opportunities offer high school students the chance to prepare for college-level expectations while earning valuable college credit.

How can high school students earn college credit?

There are a variety of options available to students, including dual enrollment or dual credit courses, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), the College Level Examination Program (CLEP), and early college high school and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs.

Spotlight on Colorado

A 2022 study shows that Colorado high school juniors and seniors who participated in dual enrollment programs, compared to those who did not, graduated from high school on time 25% more often, were 5% more likely to continue to the second year of postsecondary education, and were 15% more likely to earn a credential. These students were 8% more likely to complete their two- or four-year degrees on time, and their earnings were nearly 10% higher in the five years following high school graduation.

How do college acceleration systems benefit students?

Students in today’s global economy benefit from a range of postsecondary experiences — associate’s, bachelor’s, and other advanced degrees and certificates. Allowing high school students to work toward these during high school can shorten the time to degree completion and help mitigate the ever-increasing cost of postsecondary education. Additionally, these experiences can signify to employers that an applicant has the knowledge and skills necessary for specific jobs.

What are the challenges to implementing college acceleration opportunities?

There are four key problems that may arise when implementing college acceleration programs: (1) ensuring the programs bring quality and value to the student so they are well-prepared for later coursework, (2) ensuring that all students have equitable access to these programs, (3) building instructor and/or student capacity to make these programs feasible, and (4) securing sustainable funding.

How can policymakers and state leaders address the challenges to implementing a college acceleration program?

1. Require collection, analysis, and reporting of student outcomes from these programs;
2. Create clearly defined pathways for students as they move from K-12 into postsecondary experiences;
3. Include minimum program quality indicators as well as a requirement that students are not randomly scheduled into courses, but are scheduled according to student plans and interests.
4. Ensure eligibility criteria is broad enough to allow a wide range of students to participate in these programs
5. Create a funding model that allows for participation at little to no cost to students;
6. Notify students about college acceleration programs available to them, with a focus on low-income and traditionally underrepresented students who may succeed in these programs;
7. Require schools to ensure that educators are properly trained to teach college acceleration opportunities.



Spotlight on Florida

John I. Leonard High School in Greenacres, FL offers AP, Dual Credit, and Cambridge AICE programs. When determining student eligibility for these programs, they opted to expand upon the Pre-SAT state standard for eligibility and consider additional data points such as overall GPA and English GPA. In doing so, they increased eligibility for these courses from 15% of students to about 1,800 - half of their total student population.

The school seamlessly integrated these programs into both the academic and career and technical education pathways, allowing students to explore the course sequence for that pathway and see how college acceleration courses fit into that pathway. The school also regularly sends parents information on these programs and hosts an annual college orientation night in February.

Where can I find additional resources?

To read more: ExcelinEd, [Accelerating Students from High School to College and Careers: A Playbook for State Policymakers](#). For model policy: ExcelinEd, [Accelerated College Credit Portfolio Model Policy](#).

Contact

Lowell Matthews, Jr.

Senior Policy Advisor, Pathways

lowell@excelined.org

