

## Instruction

### Policy Addressing Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum

The Eastford Board of Education (the “Board”) understands the importance of providing opportunities for students to enroll in an advanced course or program and offering students challenging curriculum in the Eastford Public Schools (the “District”). In accordance with Connecticut law, this policy shall explain the manner in which the District determines eligibility for enrollment in advanced courses or programs and creates academic plans for students in the District.

#### I. Definitions

For purposes of this policy:

"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 the Board in grades nine to twelve, inclusive.

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

“Cambridge International program” is an internationally recognized academic program for students aged five (5) to nineteen (19). High school level courses, available only through approved Cambridge International Schools, provide students the opportunity to earn postsecondary credit that is accepted by colleges in the United States and abroad.

“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.

“International Baccalaureate (“IB”) program” is a program that offers international education through four programs for students aged three (3) to nineteen (19). The four programs are: Primary Years, Middle Years, Diploma Program, and Career-related Program. Schools must be authorized to teach IB programs. Every authorized school is known as an IB World School.

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"Prior academic performance" means the course or courses that a student has taken, the grades received for such course or courses and a student's grade point average.

#### II. Eligibility Criteria

Consistent with state law, the District will identify students in grades eight and nine 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 shall not be based exclusively on a student's prior academic performance. There are multiple methods by which a student may satisfy the eligibility criteria for enrollment in an advanced course or program, including:

- Recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors or other school personnel.
- A student's prior academic performance, as determined by evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in an advanced course or program.
- The District administration may, in its discretion, identify and publicize additional criteria, including but not limited to student or parent request. Any such criteria shall be established prior to the commencement of an academic term.

#### III. Creation of an Academic Plan/Challenging Curriculum

The District will create an academic plan for each student who is identified in grade eight or nine as eligible for enrollment in an advanced course or program. Such plan will 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. Such academic plan will also be aligned with:

- The courses or programs offered by the Board,
- The student's student success plan, created pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-221a(j),
- High school graduation requirements, and
- Any other policies or standards adopted by the Board relating to the eligibility for student enrollment in advanced courses or programs.

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The academic plan may be part of the student's success plan, which plan is required for each student by Conn. Gen. Stat. §10-221a.

A student, or the student's parent or guardian, may decline to implement the provisions of an academic plan created for such student.

**IV. Guiding Principles and Implementation**

The Board recognizes that course access and academic planning should be guided by considerations beyond traditional course eligibility criteria. Specifically, the Board recognizes that academic achievement and engagement in middle school are strong precursors to high school success. In addition, the Board recognizes the importance of engaging with a student's parents and/or guardians throughout the student's educational experience, reducing barriers to opportunities for advanced courses and programs, and providing a wide range of advanced courses that appeal to students with various interests.

The District will utilize practices designed to ensure that eligibility for enrollment in an advanced course or program, including appropriate evaluation and testing procedures, do not screen out students who are English learners/multilingual learners because of their limited English proficiency unless an advanced or specialized program is demonstrated to require proficiency in English for meaningful participation.

The Superintendent or designee shall be responsible for implementing this policy and developing procedures in furtherance of this policy and in accordance with guidance provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

**Legal Reference:**

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221a

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221w

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221x

Connecticut State Department of Education, *District Guidance for Developing an Advanced Course Participation Policy* (April 2022)

United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, *Ensuring Meaningful Participation in Advanced Coursework and Specialized Programs for Students Who Are English Learners* (June 2023)

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### **ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS ADDRESSING ENROLLMENT IN AN ADVANCED COURSE OR PROGRAM AND CHALLENGING CURRICULUM**

The Eastford Board of Education (the “Board”) understands the importance of providing opportunities for students to enroll in an advanced course or program and offering students challenging curriculum in the Eastford Public Schools (the “District”). In accordance with the Board’s Policy Addressing Enrollment in an Advanced Course or Program and Challenging Curriculum, the administration adopts the following regulations:

1. The District will identify students in grades eight and nine 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.
2. Eligibility for enrollment in an advanced course or program shall be based on the following:
  - Recommendations from teachers, administrators, school counselors or other school personnel.
  - A student’s prior academic performance, as determined by evidence-based indicators of how a student will perform in an advanced course or program.
3. In addition to or as part of student success plans required by Conn. Gen. Stat. § 10-221a(j), the District will create an academic plan for each student who is identified in grade eight or as eligible for enrollment in an advanced course or program. A student, or the student’s parent or guardian, may decline to implement the provisions of an academic plan created for such student.
4. Such academic plan will 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.
5. Middle School Preparation: Academic achievement and engagement are strong precursors to high school success. Therefore, the District strives to:
  - Coordinate standards, instruction, and expectations across middle and high school by fostering regular communication among faculty districtwide, with a focus on vertical articulation of content across the grades rather than offering courses for high school credit in middle school.

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- Offer career awareness, exploration, and immersion activities that directly align with the high school program of studies.
  - Encourage high school faculty to familiarize themselves with the Smarter Balanced system of assessments and Next Generation Science Standards assessments, including interim assessment blocks, which can be used to measure student understanding and adjust instruction in Grades 9-12.
  - Remind middle school faculty that their messaging to students regarding high school expectations has an impact on students and assure students that if they are mastering middle school standards, they are prepared academically.
  - Share students' middle school data with high school faculty to improve the quantity and quality of information available for decision making, reduce unnecessary pre-tests and the administration of screening tools, and maximize instructional time.
6. Partnerships with Families: The District recognizes and values the importance of engaging with a student's family throughout the student's educational experience. Therefore, the District strives to:
- Engage families in the development of student success plans during students' middle school years.
  - Continue and improve upon effective systems of family engagement used in middle school at the high school level.
  - Ensure families are fully aware of the benefits of taking college courses and participating in work-based learning opportunities, if available, during high school.
  - Communicate in a manner that is ongoing and accessible to families (e.g., by providing materials in multiple languages, and having translators available during information sessions, as necessary).
  - Provide families with a variety of options for engaging on the topic of course selection (e.g., large group information sessions, sessions offering more personalized support, and small sessions designed for families that have not experienced college).
  - Invite students and families to express interest in advanced coursework and discuss those choices along with career options with their school counselors, who can answer questions and serve as an advocate for the students.
7. Reducing Barriers: The District recognizes the importance of reducing barriers to opportunities for advanced courses and programs. Therefore, the District strives to:

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- Provide school counselors and teachers with lists of students identified by the Connecticut State Department of Education as having potential for success in rigorous courses.
- Share descriptive statistics with faculty showing advanced course enrollment over time and disaggregated by student group. This data can be used to track progress, discuss effective strategies, identify challenges, and/or generate potential solutions.
- Urge staff to pay special attention to student interests and coursework fit rather than relying solely on past performance when recommending advanced coursework for students.
- Not exclude students from consideration based on disability status.
- Ensure that eligibility for advanced courses and programs, including appropriate evaluation and testing procedures, do not screen out students who are English learners/multilingual learners because of their limited English proficiency unless an advanced or specialized program is demonstrated to require proficiency in English for meaningful participation.
- Ensure that students who are English learners/multilingual learners receive appropriate language assistance services while participating in advanced courses or programs.
- Communicate directly with students from low-income families that registration fees and exam fees for advanced coursework will be waived.
- Encourage students to self-advocate based on their individual goals and future plans.
- Monitor course registrations throughout the enrollment period and encourage students to reconsider selections if they have potential to be successful in more challenging courses.
- If possible, provide opportunities during the summer for students to prepare for challenging coursework by offering sessions that focus on reviewing study habits, organization, and time management.
- Provide periodic training for all staff members who identify, assist, facilitate, select, counsel, or teach students in advanced courses or programs to provide strategies to remove barriers for participation and provide high-quality instruction to all students, including students who are English learners.
- Schedule advanced courses and programs so that students do not face a scheduling barrier for participation (e.g., scheduling the only AP calculus class for the same period as English learner/multilingual learner instruction).

#### Legal Reference:

Connecticut General Statutes § 10-221a

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