

ASCENT



ASCENT Handbook - Academic Year 2025-2026 Cherry Creek School District

The purpose of this handbook is to:

- Help 2024-2025 seniors understand the details of the ASCENT program
- Support High School Counselors to explain the ASCENT program to students
- Provide detailed information to support the application process

Table of Contents

Qualifications	2
Participating Colleges and Technical Schools	3
Financial Considerations	3
FAFSA/CASFA	4
Important Information	4
Application Timeline (subject to change)	5
Application Steps	5
Glossary of Terms and Important Links	7

Thank you for your interest in the [Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment \(ASCENT\) Program](#). This is a state funded program designed for students to enroll in postsecondary courses at participating institutions and earn college credit at **no tuition cost** to them or their families. Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) will pay for a student's tuition, books, and course fees during their ASCENT year.

Students in the ASCENT program can take courses to prepare for industry certificates, learn a trade, or work towards a 2- or 4-year college degree. Students will choose to attend college/technical school either **part time** (3-11 credits a semester, about the same as 1-3 classes) or **full time** (12-18 credits a semester about the same as 3-6 classes per week).

Students accepted into the ASCENT program remain high school students during their ASCENT year. They are taking concurrent enrollment college/technical classes on the college campus/technical school (and in some cases online). The classes and grades received in their ASCENT classes will be added to their high school transcript and will be factored into their high school GPA.

After the ASCENT year, students may stay at the same institution or transfer. Transfer of credits will be determined by the accepting institution. *Most students that transfer after their ASCENT year will be considered "freshman or first year students" at their new institution. Check your transferring college for more information.*

[For more information, FAQ's, and how-to guides visit the CCSD ASCENT Website.](#)

Qualifications:

To be considered for the ASCENT program, a student must:

- Have a minimum of 9 college credits with a C or better, transcribed on a college transcript, by completion of their senior year. Students can meet the 9 credits several ways:
 - Concurrent and Dual Enrollment credits from high school (The student must have fully registered for the college credit).
 - Advanced Placement (AP) tests - From 11th grade year or earlier that are transcribed into college credits and on an unofficial transcript.
 - College Level Examination Program (CLEP) - Test scores that are transcribed into college credits and on an unofficial transcript.
 - College course taken at the college campus or online
- Meet all CCSD graduation requirements

- Is college-ready as determined by partnering institutions, and not in need of any developmental coursework in accordance with the pathway in which they enroll
- Apply for FAFSA or CASFA
The state of Colorado requires students/families to complete a FAFSA or CASFA application so they can make informed financial decisions. An ASCENT student however may not accept federal, state or institutional financial aid. *Students who are fully Pell eligible will likely receive more financial aid through FAFSA awards than through ASCENT.*
- Applies to and has been accepted into a postsecondary degree program at a qualified, partnering Colorado institution of higher education
- Not be a high school student for more than or less than 4 years

Other considerations taken into account during the application process:

- Unweighted high school GPA
- Attendance
- Student Impact Statement
- Timeliness and completeness of necessary materials

Participating Colleges:

CCSD partners with the following colleges and universities for the ASCENT program.

- Metropolitan State University of Denver
- University of Northern Colorado
- Arapahoe Community College
- Community College of Aurora
- Red Rocks Community College
- Community College of Denver
- Pickens Technical School
- Emily Griffith Technical School

Financial Considerations:

During a student's ASCENT year, CCSD will pay the following costs directly to the college:

- Tuition in approved coursework
- Student fees
- Required supplies as determined by the professor
- Textbooks - Instructions for purchasing textbooks will be emailed to student's **CreekMail** at the start of each semester

Students are responsible for other costs, including but not limited to:

- Housing (Note: UNC requires ASCENT students to live in campus housing and have a meal plan).
- Meals
- Parking
- Supplies
- Transportation - As of November 2024, the [Zero Fare for Youth](#) allows students ages 19 and younger to ride RTD for free. Subject to change.

[The College Opportunity Fund \(COF\)](#) pays a portion of the student's tuition. Students must authorize COF to make payments to the college/university. Usually this is done in the application process, however, it is the student's responsibility to confirm with the college that COF has been authorized. If COF is not authorized, the student is responsible for the COF portion of the tuition.

Students are not allowed to receive any state or federal financial aid including federal loans and grants while in ASCENT. Students may receive scholarships or grants from private foundations and institutions as long as they are not required to have graduated from high school or be a first year college student.

FAFSA/CASFA:

The state of Colorado requires ASCENT applicants to complete the [FAFSA \(Free Application for Federal Student Aid\)](#) or the [CASFA \(Colorado Application for State Financial Aid\)](#). ASCENT students must fill out the application even though **they are ineligible to receive financial aid during their ASCENT year**. Students should take a picture of the confirmation page of their application for proof of completion. We **do not** need or want to see your Student Aid Index.

After the FAFSA/CASFA form is submitted and processed, students will receive a FAFSA Submission Summary. Many colleges start providing financial award letters beginning in March/April. Often these are accessible through the student college account. The award letter will tell you what financial assistance you are eligible for **if you choose not to participate in ASCENT**. *Students who are fully Pell eligible will likely receive more financial aid through FAFSA awards than through ASCENT.*

Reach out to your High School Counselor, post-grad office, or a FAFSA expert to help decide if federal aid or ASCENT is a better financial option.

Important Information:

- ★ Because ASCENT is a concurrent enrollment high school program, ASCENT students are high school students and they **will not receive their high school diploma until they exit the ASCENT program.**
- ★ ASCENT students' graduation date will reflect their ASCENT year NOT the year they completed their high school requirements.
- ★ ASCENT students can "socially graduate" at the end of their senior year and can walk with their senior class at graduation.
- ★ The classes and grades received in their ASCENT college classes will be added to their high school and college transcript and will be factored into their high school and college GPA.
- ★ When a student completes the ASCENT program, they are considered a first year college student rather than a transfer student. This may impact how a student qualifies for financial aid and other programs after their ASCENT year.

Application Timeline (subject to change):

February 1, 2025	Application window opens Click here to apply
March 31, 2025	Priority Deadline
Mid April	Notifications emailed to students
May 15, 2025	Sign the ASCENT Agreement, emailed via PandaDoc
May 29, 2025	ASCENT and TREP Student Success Orientation
July 1, 2025	Complete the CCSD online parent forms

Completed applications received by March 31 receive priority consideration. **Students accepted for ASCENT must complete the ASCENT Student Agreement by May 15.** Students that have not completed the agreement by May 15th may forfeit their ASCENT slot. After a student has applied, they can withdraw their application from consideration by emailing ascent-trep@cherrycreekschools.org.

Application Steps:

1. Discuss this opportunity with your parents/guardians. Meet with your high school counselor to determine if ASCENT is right for you.
2. **During the school year:** Attend a required ASCENT informational presentation. Reach out to your post-grad center or counselor for dates and times.

3. **October-December:** If you haven't already, apply to the college/university of your choice. Send them official transcripts from other colleges/universities, as well as any AP/IB and/or CLEP test scores.
4. **December-February:** Complete the FAFSA or CASFA. On the application, request that your results be sent to your college/university of choice. Take a screenshot of your confirmation page for the ASCENT application.
5. **February 1 - March 31:** [Complete and submit the CCSD ASCENT Application online](#) by March 31 for priority consideration.
6. **March-April:** Check your college portal for a financial award letter. Determine if ASCENT is the right fit for you financially. Students who are fully Pell eligible will likely receive more aid through that program than through ASCENT. Reminder- ASCENT students cannot accept federal and state financial aid. CCSD will pay for your tuition, required books and fees in the ASCENT program. Housing, transportation, additional supplies, meals, etc are NOT covered through the ASCENT program.
7. **Mid-April:** ASCENT acceptance and waitlist emails sent to students CreekMail.
8. **May 15:** Complete the ASCENT agreement, email to students CreekMail via PandaDoc. Failure to confirm your participation in ASCENT could forfeit your slot.
9. RSVP to the ASCENT/TREP Success Orientation invitation on May 29, 2025.
10. Notify ascent-trep@cherrycreekschools.org immediately if you decide not to participate in ASCENT .
11. Attend the ASCENT/TREP Success Orientation on May 29, 2025.

To apply: Scan the QR code below or visit the website

<https://www.cherrycreekschools.org/Page/14839>



Glossary of Terms and Important Links:

- **ASCENT: Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment.** A fifth-year high school program that allows students to participate in concurrent enrollment the year after 12th grade, to enroll in postsecondary courses and earn college credit at no tuition cost to them or their families. To learn more visit the [ASCENT website](#).
- **FAFSA - Free Application for Federal Student Aid.** The federal government's application for student aid, guaranteed student loans, work study and in some cases, institutional aid.
- **CASFA: Colorado Application for State Financial Aid.** The State Financial Aid application for undocumented, Colorado ASSET students. The CASFA bridges equity gaps and creates access to postsecondary education for Colorado ASSET students. To learn more visit the [CAFSA website](#).
- **COF: The College Opportunity Fund** was created by the Colorado Legislature. It provides a stipend to eligible undergraduate students. The stipend pays a portion of the total in-state tuition when attending a participating Colorado college. This stipend is paid directly to the college and is not included in a Financial Aid Summary. To learn more visit the [COF website](#).