

ESSU Technical Assistance

STUDENT COUNT REQUIREMENTS FOR 18-21 YEAR OLD STUDENTS

The information in this document is taken from the *Student October Count Resource Guide* produced by the Auditing Unit of the Colorado Department of Education, and the *Amended Rules for the Administration of the Public School Finance Act of 1994*.

In Colorado, the majority of funding for schools comes from Per Pupil Revenue (PPR) allocated to districts based on an October 1 student count. Eligibility requirements for PPR are outlined in the School Finance Act and apply equally to all students including students with disabilities.

October count requirements for students ages 18-21 are the same as for all other students. Students participating in district transition services may be counted as long as the pupil meets all of the requirements for membership (enrollment and attendance).

Local school boards have the authority to set policies related to grading and credit, graduation requirements, conditions for awarding diplomas, and participation in graduation ceremonies. For 18-21 year old students who are being served through community based transition services, the following requirements are necessary to ensure that students will be eligible for funding based on the October 1 count:

- The student has not been issued a diploma
- The student must be in membership
- The student must have an active IEP
- The student must be receiving credit toward high school graduation and a diploma
- The student must have a schedule as of October 1 that documents services provided directly by a teacher, counselor, para-professional, or related services staff or have been purchased or paid for by the district

Can students continue to be counted for PPR if they have been issued a diploma?

NO. Once a student has officially graduated and received a diploma they cannot be counted for purposes of PPR or special education funding.

Can students participate in graduation ceremonies and still be counted for PPR?

YES, based on district policy related to participation. Many districts allow students to attend graduation ceremonies to symbolize the completion of school building based services. However, it is important to remember that this is a social graduation only. The student will not receive a diploma, the transcript remains active, and the student is not listed as a graduate on any district documentation.

Can the diploma be dated at the time of the social graduation?

NO. The diploma should be dated at the time the student actually exits the school district after program completion.

What coding category should be used for students being served in 18-21 year old programs?

Coding categories have been added for October student count. For students who will receive services beyond the typical senior year, students will continue to be coded as 12th grade with an additional code designating Transition year 1, 2, or 3. This will allow for more accurate coding of students.

Is there a specific type or amount of credit that needs to be awarded for transition services?

NO. Although students must continue to receive credits in order to be counted for PPR, the type or amount of credit is not specified. This would be a district level decision. Your district could choose to award one credit per semester, one credit per year, or one credit for completion of an entire program. For some students, it may be most appropriate to spread the academic and elective credits that are required for a student to graduate across the anticipated years of school district participation. When determining course titles for credit and designation on transcripts, requirements related to non-discrimination and privacy must be considered.

**Is there a specific type of schedule required?**

NO. Schedules should be completed like other students' schedules whenever possible. However, handwritten schedules are acceptable if they clearly describe where the student is for specified amounts of time. The critical factor is to make sure that the person in the district with responsibility for the October 1 count has sufficient documentation for each student.

How many hours must be documented?

The determination of full-time or part-time status is based upon the number of hours of pupil-staff contact time provided or paid for by the district. You must document 360 hours of service per semester to be eligible for the full PPR. Half-time funding can be collected with a minimum of 90 hours of documented services per semester. A student receiving services under an IEP, but unable to benefit from a full-time program because of the disability, may be counted as a full-time student. A student who is participating only in work study or independent study may be counted as a maximum of half time regardless of the number of hours the student is scheduled to work. Within the IEP, document the hours that a student is receiving services provided directly by a teacher, counselor, para-professional, or related services staff or services that are being purchased by the district. Purchased services might include vocational training, job development and job coaching activities or independent living skills development contracted through a third party.

Can a student who is attending classes at the community college be counted for PPR?

MAYBE. This depends on which system has primary responsibility for the student. If a student is taking one or two classes at the community college, the district is paying for or providing direct support services, and this is considered as part of the student's secondary education program, the hours may be counted for PPR eligibility purposes. If the district is not paying for college classes or providing direct support services, the student would not be eligible to be counted for PPR.

This CDE guidance document is meant for clarification, is not legally binding, and is not to be confused with legal advice. This guidance reflects CDE's recommendations, but Administrative Units (AUs) may have developed their own policies or procedures that differ from those described herein. Be sure to refer to your local AU's policies and procedures through the Director of Special Education. If you are seeking legal advice, please contact your legal counsel.

Since my students are in the community most of the time, will I need to account for that time?

YES. The amount of PPR that a district will be eligible to collect for a student is based on the number of hours of service. You will need to provide documentation to show where the student is and the amount of time that a student is being provided purchased or direct services. This can be documented in the student schedule and by clearly describing special education services on the services page of the IEP. For students who are working for part of the day, you will need to have attendance logs, pay stubs, and/or logs of direct contact with the student to document the required amount of service hours to be eligible for PPR. Make sure that the Pupil Count Coordinator in your district has a copy of the schedule, services page of the IEP, and other supporting documentation for each student that you will be counting.

If a student is working part of the day, can all of the student's work hours be counted as work study?

NO. For purposes of determining the number of hours of contact for students participating in work study, include the time of instruction and contact provided under the supervision of a certificated or licensed teacher. Only the work hours required to earn credit as defined in the individual student's schedule may be included. The work study program must be approved by the local board of education so it will be important to refer to district policies relating to work study requirements for instruction and supervision.

The contents of this handout were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, the content does not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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