

Successful Implementation of Advanced Opportunities

Recommendations from the State Department of Education (SDE)

With the launch of new Advanced Opportunities programs, many school districts are taking a deep dive into maximizing the benefits for their students. This document outlines some suggested steps for school districts to consider when taking on this task.

Provide Support & Advising for Students

Intentional advising of these programs is critical to optimize usage for students. Many students and parents are anxious to hear about these opportunities and know what is available, and it is up to each school to inform their patrons. The SDE recommends that all counselors make it a habit of discussing these in every scheduling conversation that they have with students and parents. These programs have significant potential, but can be complicated to implement. Additional materials are available from the SDE upon request. Below are some specific strategies that may aid advising efforts:

- **Recommended Pathways:** The SDE encourages districts to look at various course offerings and determine a recommended pathway for students who are interested in the 8 in 6 program. When developing the pathway, districts should consider how this will affect student schedules in later grades. A common solution is to direct students towards elective credits. This approach results in fewer conflicts in scheduling core classes. Additionally, students are generally more successful in an elective course because they may be personally interested in the topic. There are several IDLA courses that students tend to be successful in as a beginner in 8 in 6: Career Pathways to Success, Keyboarding, Physical Education, Digital Photography, and Culinary Arts.
- **Learning Plans:** Intentional academic advising is the key to successful implementation of Advanced Opportunities. Many districts are choosing to have students create 4, 5, and 6 year learning plans. Advising conversations should include the Fast Forward Participation Form to help students and parents understand risks of participating in such programs, and a discussion about recommended pathways. Additionally, please note that a school district may not prohibit a student from participating in Fast Forward, and is charged with assisting parents and students with the process of registration according to Idaho code 33-4602.
- **Student Support:** Participation in Advanced Opportunities can provide additional academic pressure for students. Many schools are exploring ways that they can support students in this endeavor. Examples of such support include computer lab hours for online courses, assistance with college registration, bi-weekly check-ins for students who attend dual credits on a college campus full-time, and access to high school teachers for homework help. These are just a few examples of ways that school districts have helped remove barriers for students who are interested in an Advanced Opportunities track.



Consider Course Offerings

The make and model of Advanced Opportunities in specific school settings has numerous possibilities. School districts are empowered to entertain various options to make these programs accessible through overload courses, dual credit courses, and exams. Many students are seeking to get a jump start on their college education and career path and re-thinking the logistics of course offerings represents an opportunity to reformat the school day to accommodate Advanced Opportunity students. Below are some examples of course offering considerations:

- **Offer Local Overload Courses:** Overload courses can be offered by a school district for their own students. This is a course taught outside of the regular school day (i.e., after school, weekends, summer). For such extra courses school districts may charge a fee (the SDE reimburses up to \$225 for each student taking an overload course). Districts are exploring the option to offer overload courses, both virtually and in brick and mortar settings.
- **Dual Credit Course Offerings:** Many school districts have a limited number of dual credit offerings available to students on their high school campus. In this case, we encourage districts to think outside of the box to determine how courses can become available to students. It is critical that student's opportunities are not limited due to local availability. To make additional courses available to students, districts may consider:
 1. Online courses through IDLA.
 2. Online courses directly through the college/university (in state and out of state)
 3. Courses on a college campus
 4. Partner courses through other school districts via virtual connectivity

Additionally, we encourage school districts to explore avenues for increasing the number of teachers who are dual credit certified. Districts can use funding allocated for leadership premiums to encourage such a pursuit. For more information on how high school teachers obtain dual credit certification contact the dual credit coordinators at each institution.

- **Career & Technical Education (CTE):** CTE is particularly enticing to high school students. It allows them to have initial hands-on experiences related to various career paths. CTE courses can be offered for technical competency credit and dual credit depending on the articulation agreement with post-secondary providers. Advanced Opportunities provides funding for courses that offer dual credit and can assist student in paying for CTE exams.
- **College Level Examination Program (CLEP):** CLEP exams are a unique alternative for students to earn college credit by exam. Several school districts have worked with local post-secondary providers to expand access to these exams. For example, some districts encourage students who come from Spanish-speaking homes to take the Spanish CLEP exam. This exam is paid for by Advanced Opportunities, and in return, the student can earn secondary credit and college credit at the same time.

