

## News Release

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### Course Options program to expand opportunities for students

MADISON — The doors to higher education and expanded educational opportunities are opening a little wider for public school students with the rollout of Wisconsin’s new Course Options program.

The 2013-15 state budget eliminated part-time open enrollment, a program that had allowed high school students to attend courses in other public school districts while remaining enrolled in their resident district, and established the Course Options program for students at all grade levels. Through Course Options, students may take up to two classes at a time from approved educational institutions in Wisconsin at no cost to students or their parents. Educational institutions include

- public schools in a non-resident school district,
- charter schools,
- technical colleges,
- University of Wisconsin System,
- tribal colleges,
- nonprofit institutions of higher education, and
- nonprofit organizations approved by the Department of Public Instruction.

“Wisconsin has many talented students who want to broaden their horizons or accelerate their learning by taking specialized or college-level coursework,” said State Superintendent Tony Evers. “Course Options provides another way for Wisconsin’s public school students to access the courses they need to graduate ready for success in college and career.”

Through Course Options, students across the state will have new opportunities to access a wide variety of coursework and to earn college credits while in high school. For example, students could take advantage of unique courses offered by a neighboring school district or earn dual credit for courses offered by a university or technical college. Course Options also will provide another pathway for high schools to build or expand their own concurrent enrollment or transcribed credit programs in partnership with local institutions of higher education at no cost to students and their families.

(more)

Materials from the DPI provide guidance and instructions for students, parents, school districts, and educational institutions regarding local implementation of the program in accordance with state law, including the Course Options student application. In addition, an application and approval process for nonprofit organizations, limited to eligible private schools in the first year, is also available through the DPI.

Under the law, parents submit applications directly to the educational institution the pupil wishes to attend at least six weeks before the start of the course. The educational institution must send a copy of the application to the pupil's resident school board and, no later than one week prior to the date on which the course is scheduled to commence, the educational institution must notify the applicant and the resident school board whether the application has been accepted or rejected.

Reasons for rejection are limited. Educational institutions may deny a request if the student does not meet course prerequisites or entrance criteria or if there isn't space available in the course. School districts must deny a request if it will conflict with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and may reject applications if the requested course does not satisfy high school graduation requirements or if it does not support the student's academic and career plan.

Like the prior part-time open enrollment law, 2013 Wisconsin Act 20 requires all Course Options courses to be made available to public school students at no cost to the student and states that resident school districts are responsible for paying for the course. However, no new state funds were allocated for the expanded Course Options program, and Wisconsin school districts that must fund this program remain under tight revenue controls. The DPI worked to mitigate costs for school districts by requiring institutions of higher education and resident school districts to negotiate the costs of dual credit courses locally and create cost-sharing agreements that are ideally cost-neutral to both parties. This approach is based on the many successful transcribed credit partnerships that Wisconsin's technical colleges and high schools have already established across the state.

"We want every Wisconsin student to graduate college and career ready, ideally with college credits or an industry certification in hand," Evers said. "We are grateful for the many successful partnerships that already exist to help students reach these goals and look forward to the new opportunities that Course Options will offer Wisconsin students and families."

Students can start accessing the Course Option program for the 2014-15 school year. Materials and further information are available online at <http://courseoptions.dpi.wi.gov/>.

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**NOTE:** Additional information about the Course Options program is available online at <http://courseoptions.dpi.wi.gov/>. This news release is available electronically at [http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2014\\_25.pdf](http://news.dpi.wi.gov/files/eis/pdf/dpinr2014_25.pdf).