



Advanced Course Network

Expanding Opportunities

A GUIDE FOR MEMBER SCHOOLS



AdvancedCoursework@ride.ri.gov

<http://ride.ri.gov/ACN>



DOCUMENT SUBJECT TO CHANGE
(NOTE VERSION DATE IN FOOTER)

INTRODUCTION TO PREPARERI

PrepareRI is an initiative to prepare all Rhode Island youth with the skills they need for jobs that pay. It represents a strategic partnership between the Rhode Island government, private industry leaders, the public education system, universities, and non-profits across the state. PrepareRI launched in 2016, after Rhode Island was awarded a New Skills for Youth grant from JPMorgan Chase and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO).

For students, PrepareRI aims to close the gap between what students learn in school and what they need for high-demand jobs. The initiative was built on the belief that all young people — regardless of their previous background or intended career — will need some form of postsecondary credential and practical work experience to be successful.

For businesses, PrepareRI ensures that employers have the workforce they require to thrive in the economy of tomorrow. This fills a crucial need in Rhode Island; currently, less than 45 percent of residents have a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized certificate, yet 70 percent of jobs will require those credentials by 2020.

Making this goal a reality involves a coordinated effort from teachers, school leaders, superintendents, and all stakeholders in Rhode Island's education system.

More information about PrepareRI can be found at www.Prepare-RI.org.

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE CHOICE

All efforts, big and small by schools, districts, and the state, including through PrepareRI, are in effort to help students find, be ready for, and participate in, the right experiences that will both prepare and accelerate students on the path after high school. To do this well we need to acknowledge that every school could not possible offer every course or experiences to meet the need of every student.

Enter course choice programs offered by the state. These programs that identify unique, low instance, high demand and/or high cost to replicate offerings of courses from districts, community organizations, partners of Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training, and colleges, which schools can extend to their students.

These experiences are currently offered through three initiatives: Career and Technical Education, the PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Fund, and the Advanced Course Network. More information about each can be found at each of the links below.

- Career and Technical Education: www.ride.ri.gov/CTE
- PrepareRI Dual Enrollment Fund: www.ride.ri.gov/DualEnrollment
- Advanced Course Network: www.ride.ri.gov/ACN

INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

This guide will focus on the Advanced Course Network, a course choice program under the PrepareRI Initiative. The guide is formatted to reflect frequently asked questions and divided into sections based on the various program stakeholders. This guide along with other referenced documents will be updated frequently. Be sure to check back to the RIDE website often for the most recent versions.

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ABOUT THE ADVANCED COURSE NETWORK

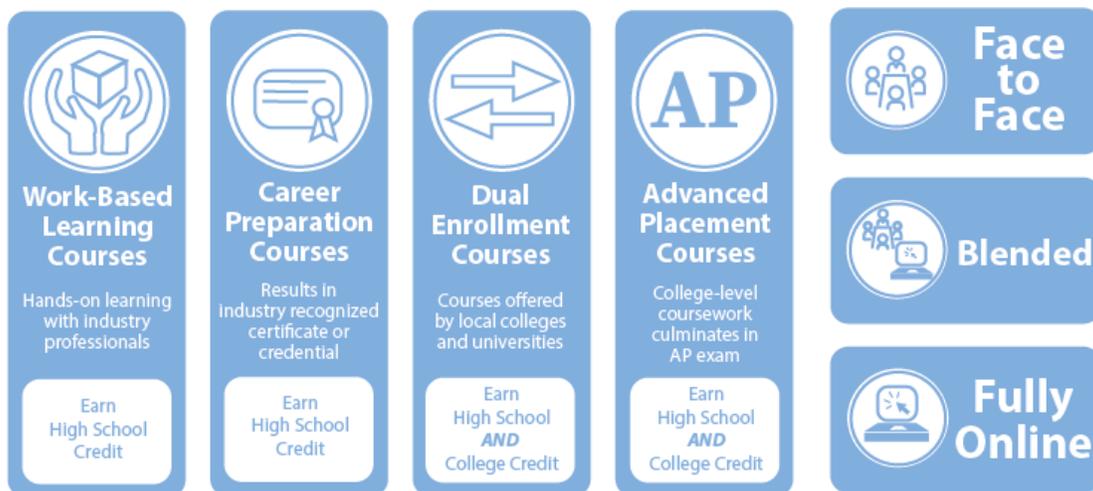
GENERAL QUESTIONS:

WHAT IS THE ADVANCED COURSE NETWORK?

The Advanced Course Network (ACN) offers advanced coursework options for Rhode Island students with the goal of expanding access to advanced coursework opportunities that promote college and career readiness. The ACN enables students and their families to choose to enroll in an expanded number of high value academic- and career-focused courses while they remain enrolled at their public school. The ACN is made up of *Network Members* (schools and districts that voluntarily chooses to extend the ACN opportunities to students), and *Network Providers* (school districts, Rhode Island based community based organizations, higher education institutions and approved Department of Labor and Training (DLT) training partners) that extends advanced coursework opportunities to Rhode Island students.

WHAT TYPES OF COURSES ARE OFFERED IN THE ACN?

There are four types of courses offered in the ACN, all of which may be offered in a face-to-face, blended, or fully online setting. A printable handout explaining the [types of ACN courses](#) is available on the ride website.



- **Work-based Learning** courses assist students in accomplishing deep learning in a chosen area of interest and allow students to explore future career pathways. These courses meet the [Governor's Workforce Board](#) (GWB) definition of work-based learning and incorporate Applied Learning Skills measured by either the [RI Learning Champions](#) or approved alternative rubrics. They may also align to the [Career and Technical Education Board Standards](#) and/or State-adopted content standards. Work-based learning courses result in one or more of the following:
 - Credit earned may be part of a certificate or degree program at the college/university
 - Experience and/or mentorship with practicing industry professionals
 - Experience on a worksite
 - Internship placement
 - Summer or afterschool employment related to skills gained in course
 - Completion of an real or simulated work project
- **Career Preparation** courses assist students in accomplishing deep learning in a chosen area of interest and prepares them for employment or further education in a career path. These courses incorporate one or more sets of [standards from the Career and Technical Education Board](#). They may also incorporate State-adopted content standards and/or Applied Learning Skills measured by either the [RI Learning](#)

[Champions](#) or approved alternative rubrics. These courses allow students to earn an [industry-recognized credential](#), which leads to potential advanced standing for employment opportunities. They may also provide one or more of the following:

- Experience and/or mentorship with practicing industry professionals
 - Experience on a worksite
 - Internship placement
 - Summer or afterschool employment related to skills gained in the course
- **Dual Enrollment** courses are offered by colleges to allow students to explore college level coursework and college communities to determine their interest in possible postsecondary education paths. These courses require the same standards as in the college course, including rigor and expectations, as offered to degree- or certificate-seeking students. They incorporate standards from [the Career and Technical Education Board](#), State-adopted content standards; and/or Applied Learning Skills measured by either the [RI Learning Champions](#) or approved alternative rubrics. These courses allow students to earn high school credit as well as college credit from the provider institution. They may also provide one or more of the following:
 - Credit earned may be part of a certificate or degree program at the college/university
 - Experience and/or mentorship with practicing industry professionals
 - Experience on a worksite
 - Internship placement
 - Summer or afterschool employment related to skills gained in course
 - Completion of an real or simulated work project
- **Advanced Placement** courses are developed and approved by the College Board and offer students the opportunity to earn college credit through an end of course exam. The courses incorporate one or more sets of the College Board Standards for College Success and relevant State-adopted content standards. They may also be aligned to the [Career and Technical Education Board Standards](#) and/or Applied Learning Skills measured by either the [RI Learning Champions](#) or approved alternative rubrics. These courses allow students to earn high school credit as well as college credit from the provider institution. They may also provide one or more of the following:
 - Credit earned may be part of a certificate or degree program at the college/university
 - Experience and/or mentorship with practicing industry professionals
 - Experience on a worksite
 - Internship placement
 - Summer or afterschool employment related to skills gained in course ●
 - Completion of an real or simulated work project

WHICH SPECIFIC COURSES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE ACN?

The ACN course listings are available online at <http://ride.GoSignMeUp.com>. The catalog is easily searchable by discipline, type of course, and provider. The catalog is updated twice a year, once in late March for summer, fall and year-long courses, and additionally in October for spring courses.

WHEN CAN STUDENTS REGISTER FOR COURSES?

There are two main registration periods:

1. Late March through the beginning of June for summer, fall, and year-long courses; and
Late October through December for spring courses.

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NETWORK MEMBERSHIP:

WHAT IS A "NETWORK MEMBER"?

A **Network Member** is any Rhode Island Local Educational Authority (LEA) or school that voluntarily chooses to extend the Advanced Coursework Network opportunities to students in their district and/or school. As Network Members, schools and districts enable students and their families to choose to enroll in formerly unavailable high value academic- and career-focused courses while they remain enrolled at their public school.

WHAT ARE THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR NETWORK MEMBERS?

Schools and districts that choose to join the network designate a staff member or members to ensure the consistent communication between your school and the Network coordinators. The school or district/LEA designated staff become the main the point of contact for:

- **Advising students** on courses that match their interests and meet their graduation requirements;
- **Communicating** the available opportunities, benefits and risks to students and families;
- **Assisting students** with course registration through the online portal;
- **Confirming enrollments** through the online portal;
- **Ensuring final grades and credits are reflected** on report cards and transcripts for students who participate and successfully complete a Network course; and
- **Ensuring equitable access** to and equitable participation in the Network, by addressing the needs of students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries in order to overcome barriers to equitable participation.

HOW DOES A SCHOOL BECOME A NETWORK MEMBER?

Interested member schools sign and return the [Network Member Assurances](#) [PDF, 387KB] to RIDE at advancedcoursework@ride.ri.gov. Your school or district is then added to the list of Member schools as well as to the registration portal.

CAN A DISTRICT OR SCHOOL BE A NETWORK PROVIDER AND OFFER COURSES TO STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF THEIR SCHOOL/DISTRICT THROUGH THE ACN?

Yes, a **Network Provider** can be either a District/LEA or school; RI community-based organization; approved Department of Labor and Training (DLT) program; or higher education institution that delivers advanced coursework opportunities to Rhode Island students through the network. Please refer to the [Network Provider Support Toolkit and FAQs](#).

CAN APPROVED CTE PROGRAMS BE IN THE ADVANCED COURSE NETWORK?

It is unnecessary for full CTE programs to apply to be ACN providers as both state-wide student access and a funding stream via tuition are available as a benefit of the CTE approval status. Instead, information about full programs can be promoted alongside ACN courses. Districts that wish to offer a course that may be a part of a CTE program may do so as long as the course meets the standards and outcome expectations of one of the four types of ACN courses.

As a reminder, when a school offers courses as an ACN provider, the ACN covers tuition only for students from other schools to take the course.

CAN A COURSE IN THE ACN HELP MEET PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS OF A RIDE-APPROVED CTE PROGRAM?

RIDE-Approved CTE Programs are expected to meet all CTE Board of Trustee expectations to maintain approved status. As courses in the Advanced Course Network can change on a routine basis and seats are not guaranteed to any cohort, CTE programs should not expect that any requirement will be met for all program students through the ACN.

CTE programs, may choose to engage the ACN in one of these cases:

- On a short term basis during a period in which the CTE Program Provider is temporarily unable to meet the expectation of the program and a course in the ACN explicitly addresses the need.
- On a case by case basis in which a student of the CTE program is unable to participate in the offering by the program that addresses the need and the ACN course provides an alternative schedule or arrangement that better meets the student's need.

COST CONSIDERATIONS:

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO BE A MEMBER OF THE ACN?

The Rhode Island Department of Education supports the costs of Network coursework through state discretionary funds for students not enrolled as full time students at the Network Provider location. There is no cost to the district, school or family to be a Network Member or to take a Network course. The cost of books and course materials are covered by state funding via per student tuition payments to Network Providers. No funding will be re-purposed from the funding formula to support the Network.

While options are available in blended or virtual formats, some courses are offered face to face in a classroom setting. Students and their families are responsible for transportation the student to the course at the Network Provider's location. The school or district may choose to support transportation of their students.

DOES A SCHOOL OR LEA NEED TO ADD STAFF TO RUN THE ACN PROGRAM?

RIDE has assigned staff to coordinate and oversee the ACN program. Schools and LEAs should designate a staff member(s) at the school to be the main point of contact for student registration, grades, student transcripts, etc.

DOES FUNDING COVER THE COST OF ADVANCED PLACEMENT (AP) TESTING?

The allocated funding does pay for the costs associated with AP coursework and testing. AP exam are ordered by and taken at the student's local school. The local school bills the provider for the cost of the AP exam.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS FOR THE ACN?

Students and their families are responsible for transporting the student to the course if the course meets face-to-face. The school or LEA may choose to support transportation of their students.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING BOOKS FOR THE ACN?

State funding will address the books and course materials for courses via the per student tuition payment to the Network Provider. Districts and families are not responsible for the costs of books.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE AMONG REGULAR HIGH SCHOOL OR MIDDLE SCHOOL COURSES AND THE ADVANCED COURSE NETWORK COURSE OFFERINGS?

Students participating in the ACN earn credit toward their high school or middle school coursework requirements by enrolling in courses that are not traditionally offered at their public school. ACN courses are offered in a variety of modalities, including traditional (e.g. face-to-face), online, or a hybrid (e.g. blended) courses. The main difference is that the student are taking courses provided by other LEAs, organizations or higher education institutions. ACN courses have the same rigorous educational expectations and learning objectives as traditional advanced classes for high school or middle school students, respectively.

ARE THE ACADEMIC RULES DIFFERENT IF THE CLASS IS HELD BY A NETWORK PROVIDER SCHOOL?

No, the same rules apply regardless of location. Credit earned through an ACN option becomes part of the student's transcript. For that reason, a course must maintain the integrity and rigor of advanced level work regardless of where, how or by whom the class is taught.

WHEN DOES COURSEWORK COUNT TOWARD HIGH SCHOOL OR MIDDLE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS?

In Network member schools and districts, students can enroll in ACN courses to satisfy academic coursework requirements for a high school diploma or middle school promotion. As part of the participating in the Network, LEAs agree to grant credit for Network courses.

DO COURSES COUNT AS ELECTIVE CREDIT OR CORE CREDIT?

As part of participating in the Network, LEAs agree to grant credit for Network courses. It is a local decision as to how a Network course counts for high school credit. The LEA must determine and publish the grading policy for Network courses. Course standards alignment information assists districts in deciding the type of credit awarded for each course.

WHAT GRADE DOES THE STUDENT NEED TO RECEIVE FOR A NETWORK COURSE TO COUNT TOWARD HIGH SCHOOL OR MIDDLE SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS?

As part of the participating in the Network, LEAs agree to grant credit for Network courses. The LEA must determine and publish the grading policy for Network courses. The minimum passing grade for ACN courses are listed in the course catalog found at <http://ride.gosignmeup.com>. The grade awarded for the course must be included on a student's high school transcript. The school or LEA determines how the course credit will appear on the high school transcript. It is recommended that the course title on the high school transcript match the ACN course title.

IF A STUDENT DOES NOT COMPLETE AN ACN COURSE WITH A PASSING GRADE, WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

The student is responsible for the grade received and it will appear on the official high school transcript. It is vital that students pay close attention to the withdrawal deadlines designated by individual Providers. The student should communicate immediately with their guidance counselor if he/she is considering withdrawing from a course for any reason. Forfeited credit for the course could mean that the student lacks credit for high school graduation.

IS THERE A COURSE LIMIT FOR COURSES TAKEN AS PART OF THE ACN?

Students are currently limited to enrolling in no more than one course over the summer; and no more than two courses at a time during the fall and spring semesters.

DOES AN ACN COURSE PROVIDE EXTRA WEIGHT FOR A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT'S GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)?

The LEA may determine to give a Network course extra weight in calculating a high school GPA. The LEA is responsible for publishing this information for students and their families.

CAN ACN COURSES COUNT FOR COLLEGE CREDIT?

If the Advanced Coursework Network course is offered through a college or university, students completing the course may be eligible to earn college credit. Students should check with their guidance counselors to learn if college credit can be earned and transferred. The [ACN Course Type](#) handout found on the RIDE website can be helpful in understanding how the various types of course are aligned to standards and the course outcomes.

Each institution of higher education has its own transfer policy. Students should consider credit transferability if aware of institution or type of program that they want to enroll in after high school. Students should call the institution they are interested in attending to see if the credits will be accepted.

ACADEMIC - STUDENT REGISTRATION:

HOW DO STUDENTS REGISTER FOR ACN COURSES?

Registering for a course is easy. Students and their families can register online at <http://ride.gosignmeup.com>. The online course catalog is searchable in a variety of ways including type of course, modality, discipline, specific provider, or key word. School counselors or administrators assist students in registering for ACN courses and help ensure that students receive high school credit for a course.

There are three easy steps for students to take when registering for a course:

1. **Students create an account at <http://ride.gosignmeup.com>.**
 - The **Create an Account** link is found in the upper right hand corner of the page.
2. **Students select a course and Pre-registers for up to two ACN course(s) per semester.**
 - The student selects the course that they want to take and click the **black Pre-register button** below the course information which will add the course to their cart.
 - They check out by clicking on the cart or the **green Complete Pre-registration button** which will appear below the course.
 - The student will receive an email that confirms their pre-registration. Students should see the school counselor or ACN administrator if they do not receive a confirmation email.
 - The pre-registration will automatically be sent to the school for review / approval.
 - The student will receive an email letting them know once they are approved completing the enrollment process.
3. **Students follow the course instructor's directions.**
 - Students should be on the lookout for an email from their course instructor once approved.
 - This email will contain any additional information or instructions the student will need to follow before the start of the course.





A printable Quick Steps Guide ([Summer/Fall Courses](#) and [Spring Courses](#)) is available on the RIDE website.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THE STUDENT SUCCESSFULLY ENROLLS IN THE ACN COURSE?

The LEA or school should assign staff to work with the student to:

- assist students to enroll in courses;
- ensure that students follow the established enrollment procedure; and
- track student enrollment, course grades and course completion.

HOW DOES THE SCHOOL APPROVE A STUDENT REGISTRATION?

The ACN point person for the school will automatically receive an email when a student registers for a course. This email prompts the school point person to login to <http://ride.gosignmeup.com> and enroll a student.



The following short video illustrates the steps: [Approving a Student for a Network Course](#)

WHO COMMUNICATES TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES ABOUT THE LIST OF AVAILABLE ACN COURSES THAT ARE OFFERED?

RIDE will publish the course offerings on <http://ride.gosignmeup.com>. This occurs twice a year upon course Provider approval. The Network Member LEA or school should review and publicize course offerings to students and families through their regular communications channels.

WHEN ARE THE AVAILABLE COURSES UPDATED IN THE GOSIGNMEUP ONLINE PORTAL?

There are two registration periods each year, one from late March through early June for summer, fall and year-long courses; and the other from October through late December for spring courses. The course offerings detail student eligibility criteria and prerequisites, course Provider, delivery modality, and corresponding course information.

The school or LEA should provide all students and their families with the available course and program information as far in advance as possible of course selection and enrollment periods. Refer to the District and School ACN Toolkit for a variety of resources.

ACADEMIC - STUDENT ELIGIBILITY AND SUPPORTS:

BY “ADVANCED” COURSE NETWORK, DOES THIS MEAN THESE COURSE ARE ONLY FOR ADVANCED STUDENTS?

No. The ACN is designed to provide rigorous learning opportunities that support ALL students in developing their individualized pathways. We are thinking of “Advanced” beyond what may initially come to mind. We are thinking of it as advancing the student in rigorous learning opportunities no matter what pathway they are on.

HOW DO I KNOW IF A STUDENT IS ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACN?

Any Rhode Island public high school or middle school student enrolled with a Network member school can choose to register for a course. Depending on the course chosen, students may need to meet a set of prerequisites (determined on an individual course basis). The students' local academic achievement and attendance record maybe taken into consideration but should not be the sole determinant of a student's eligibility to participate. The decision regarding a student's participation in Network courses is subject to appeal through the LEA's appeals policy.

ARE STUDENTS ELIGIBLE TO TAKE ACN COURSES AFTER GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL?

No. The ACN was created for high school students to challenge themselves during high school and get ahead in college. Students who have graduated high school are no longer be eligible to participate in ACN courses.

DO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO RECEIVE SERVICES THROUGH AN IEP OR 504 ACCOMMODATIONS NEED TO MEET THE SAME ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AS OTHER STUDENTS?

Yes, students with disabilities are held to the same eligibility criteria outlined by the LEA. Students with disabilities will receive from the Network Provider the protections, services and accommodations as prescribed by federal and state law.

DO THE ACCOMMODATIONS LISTED IN THE SECONDARY STUDENT'S IEP OR 504 AUTOMATICALLY APPLY TO ACN CLASSES?

Not necessarily. Students with disabilities who meet the prerequisites of a course must be provided reasonable accommodations through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in Advanced Coursework Network courses to ensure the same access as students without disabilities. Courses offered by postsecondary institutions are not required to modify course content or performance expectations that would substantially alter the essential elements of the course. Not all accommodations available at the high school or middle school may be allowed in college level classes. With the help of their high school, students receiving special education services and/or reasonable accommodations in high school or middle school should meet with the disability services office of the higher education institution to arrange for necessary accommodations in college courses. Students with an IEP may reconvene their IEP team to discuss the special education services they receive and how those services may support their enrollment in Network courses.

WHAT IF STUDENTS PLAN THEIR NEXT YEAR AROUND AN ACN OPPORTUNITY AND WHEN THEY ARE ABLE TO REGISTER THERE IS NO LONGER SPACE IN THE COURSE?

Any scheduling issue should be handled in accordance with the LEAs local policies and is not different than scheduling for other advanced coursework opportunities. The student, working with the school counselor or school administrator, should establish a backup plan in the event they cannot get their first choice courses.

WHAT IF THERE IS NO ROOM IN THE STUDENT'S SCHEDULE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACN?

The school counselor or appropriate administrator should work with the student to accommodate the desired course as much as possible based on the student's schedule and graduation requirements. Note that options will be offered outside of the traditional school day hours.

DISTRICT ACN POLICY AND REPORTING:

MUST LEAS ADOPT A LOCAL ACN POLICY?

LEAs and schools that choose to be a Network Member are strongly encouraged to adopt policy for ACN programming.

WHAT ELEMENTS ARE RECOMMENDED TO BE IN THE LOCAL ACN POLICY?

The local policy should ensure that it covers all local responsibilities outlined in these FAQs, including but not limited to:

- Academic information including communication about available courses, educational outcomes, grading policy, awarding of high school or middle school credit, respectively and transcript process.
- High School instructor approval and identification of designated staff coordinators.
- Student eligibility criteria including local criteria, process to enroll and appeals process.
- Student supports including communication to students and families regarding the benefits, accommodations for students with disabilities, and transportation.
- Information access and management including the communications process and timing to notify students and families of Advanced Course Network opportunities.
- Reporting ensuring there is a process to track student enrollment in and completion of Network courses.

HOW AND WHEN DOES THE SCHOOL RECEIVE GRADES FOR STUDENTS TAKING AN ACN COURSE?

Student grade appear in the GoSignMeUp online portal at the end of each semester. Members are updated by RIDE through email when Providers have complete the reporting process at the end of a course. Grades are easily exported to an Excel file to go into the LEAs student information system.

COMMUNICATION TOOLS

DOES RIDE HAVE COMMUNICATIONS MATERIALS FOR SCHOOLS TO USE IN MESSAGING STUDENTS/FAMILIES ABOUT THE ACN?

Check the RIDE website (<http://ride.ri.gov/ACN>) often as resources are continually added to the toolkits available for member schools, students and families.



- **Sample Letter to Students and Families:**
 - [English](#)
 - [Spanish](#)
- **Printable Quick Guides:**
 - [Steps for Students to Register for a Summer or Fall Course](#) [PDF, 229KB]
 - [Steps for Students to Register for a Spring ACN Course](#) [PDF, 229KB]