**Mesa County Valley School District #51**

**ASCENT Program: *Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment 2013/2014***

**What is ASCENT?**

In May 2009, the Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 09-1319 and Senate Bill 09-285, the Concurrent Enrollment Programs Act. The collective intent is to broaden access to and improve the quality of concurrent enrollment programs, improve coordination between institutions of secondary education and institutions of higher education, and ensure financial transparency and accountability.

This legislation also created the ASCENT program.

ASCENT stands for Accelerating Students through Concurrent Enrollment. It is a “5th Year Program” that allows seniors to remain enrolled at the high school and take a fifth year consisting entirely of college classes, if they have met all of their high school graduation requirements and have taken 12 credit hours of college classes prior to the end of their senior year.

**How would ASCENT benefit students?**

By participating in this program, a student will get to take college classes for the 2013-14 school year while Mesa County Valley School District (MCVSD) pays their college tuition (see below for tuition details). **The District will pay a set amount of tuition for the student. This rate is set by Colorado Department of Education’s PPOR (per pupil allotment) the District receives from the State. The student/family is responsible for any and all tuition/fees and costs which are above and beyond the proportioned amount (approximately $5800 this current year).** The ASCENT program is designed to allow students to complete an Associate’s Degree at the completion of their “5th Year” of high school.

**How do students qualify for the program?**

Students must:

\*Remain enrolled at the high school for a fifth year (they do not attend classes at the high school)

\*Be under the age of 21. Have a GPA in college courses of at least 2.5.

\*Be on track to meet all high school graduation requirements by the end of their senior year.

\*Have completed, or be on track to complete, at least 12 credit hours of college course work prior to the completion of the 12th grade year. These credits may be from, but are not limited to: High School Scholars courses) (Colorado Mesa University courses taken in the high school for college and/or high school credit), Technical Scholars courses (classes taken for dual credit through WCCC), Concurrent classes taken at Colorado Mesa University or WCCC, and/or CLEP tests at a college. The credits must be on a college transcript (i.e. a score of 5 on an AP test is NOT accepted as a “credit” unless it has been transcribed).

\*Not be in need of basic skills or remedial course work as defined by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education’s (CCHE) remedial education policy.

\*Have satisfied the minimum prerequisites for the college courses before enrollment in the course, including having the required ACT and/or ACCUPLACER score(s).

\*\*\*\*Students wishing to participate in a Career/Technical program (AAS or Certificate programs) do not have to meet the remedial course work and/or ACT/ACCUPLACER requirements stated above due to the nature of the educational programs. Students wishing to pursue a Technical/Vocational program must provide proof of acceptance to the AAS/Certificate program of choice.

\*Complete an Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) with their high school counselor.

\*Apply to the Colorado postsecondary institution where they plan to take college classes.

\*Have not participated in the ASCENT program in previous years.

**\*Apply for ASCENT by December 10, 2012**

**Will all eligible students be able to participate in ASCENT?**

No. At this time, Mesa County School District has a limited number of slots available for ASCENT for the 2012-13 year. Funding for ASCENT is provided by the State of Colorado, and final funding approval will not be known until after graduation. **Application of eligible students does not guarantee acceptance.**

**Should all qualified students participate in ASCENT?**

No. The following students should not participate:

* Students who want to attend college out of state their freshman year.
* Students who want to play inter-collegiate sports (NCAA).

Students who will require Federal financial aid (federal student loans, federal grants) to cover

expenses not covered by ASCENT like fees and books.

**How much college tuition will Mesa County Valley School District pay?**

**Students/families are responsible for any tuition rate above the district’s PPOR amount from CDE (approximately $5800 this year) and/or fees and books and supplies.**

**Do students have to reimburse Mesa County Valley School District for the cost of tuition?**

Students who pass their classes with a grade of “C” or better do not reimburse Mesa County Valley School District for the amount of tuition paid. However, students who drop a course after the college drop deadline or receive a failing grade (“D” or “F”) will be required to reimburse the district for the amount of tuition paid. **Students who fail (earn a final grade of a “D” or an “F”) will also not be eligible to return to CMU/WCCC as an ASCENT student for the Spring semester.**

**Will Mesa County Valley School District pay for student’s room, board, books, supplies, transportation and fees at the college?**

No. MCVSD will pay for tuition up to the district’s PPOR amount from CDE. **Students/families are responsible for any tuition above the PPOR amount from CDE (approximately $5800 this year), as well as room/board, transportation, and/or fees and books and supplies.**

**Does participating in this program impact the amount of financial aid a student may receive?**

Yes. Students are not eligible for any federal student financial aid including federal student loans and grants while participating in ASCENT. Students will qualify for federal aid after they have completed or dropped the program. Students may disqualify themselves from certain scholarships or grants since 12 semester hours or more earned in college may cause the student to be classified as a transfer student rather than a freshman. ***It is important for families to weigh all of their financial options before committing to the ASCENT program.***

**If students stay enrolled at the high school for a 5th year, when will they be considered a high school graduate?**

Until students complete the 5th year ASCENT program, they will still be classified as a high school student. High school transcript will show high school graduation requirements have been met and student is considered enrolled in ASCENT for a 5th year. Once students complete or stop participating in the ASCENT program, they will receive their high school diploma and be classified as a high school graduate. The diploma award date will depend on when the student finishes/drops out of the ASCENT program. Students who choose not continue in the ASCENT program for the duration of the academic year will not receive their diplomas/have their transcripts released until all fees are paid. Students un-enrolling from the ASCENT program after October 1st will not receive their high school diploma/transcripts until May of the 5th year.

**Will students be able to participate in a high school graduation?**

Yes! Students will still participate in the graduation ceremony with their high school class. Students will receive a certificate stating that they are an ASCENT student for the 2012-13 school year. At the completion of the ASCENT year, they will receive a high school diploma.

**Where can students take college classes?**

MCVSD has agreements in place with: Colorado Mesa University/Western Colorado Community College and Colorado Northwestern Community College.

**Is there a limit to the number of credits a student can take?**

ASCENT students may enroll in a maximum of 15 credit hours per semester. MCVSD will require a minimum number of 12 credit hours each semester to participate in ASCENT. **We highly recommend that students not enroll in more than 15 credit hours per semester, but students who feel they are ready for the additional coursework may pay for additional courses.** If a student wishes to enroll in more than 15 credit hours per semester, all financial obligations for the additional coursework rest entirely on the student/family.

**Are students required to participate for the entire 2013-14 school year?**

No. MCVSD encourages students to take advantage of the financial support for the full year, but a student can stop participating any time. If a student drops a class after the final drop deadline or receives a failing grade (“D” or “F”), they will have to reimburse MCVSD for the cost of tuition. Diplomas and transcripts will not be released until all financial obligations have been met. Students un-enrolling from the ASCENT program after October 1st will not receive their high school diploma/transcripts until May of the 5th year.

**Which college classes can a student take?**

Students are encouraged to enroll in Guarantee Transfer courses (see your counselor for a list of approved courses) and/or courses that apply to a specific career pathway as indicated in the student’s Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). The courses must apply toward a college degree or certificate.

**Can a student participate in college activities and athletics?**

Students may participate in college activities and club sports, but are not eligible to participate in inter-collegiate athletics. Students who plan to play NCAA athletics should not participate in ASCENT.

**Can a student live in the dorms?**

Nothing prevents a student from staying in the dorms while taking college classes through ASCENT. However, the cost of room and board is not covered through the ASCENT program. Students will be responsible for covering these expenses.

**Will Mesa County School District provide transportation to the college?**

No, a student will be responsible for providing his/her own transportation.

**What else does a student need to know?**

\*Students may only participate in the ASCENT program for the 2013-14 academic year.

\*Online classes and summer classes are not covered under the ASCENT program.

\*Students will have to apply for and use the Colorado Opportunity Fund (COF) stipend. The ASCENT year credits will count toward the lifetime limit of 145 COF-supported credits.

\*The grades a student receives in the college classes will appear on both their high school transcript and college transcript.

\*Undocumented students can participate in ASCENT.

**What do students need to do now?**

If students are interested in the program, see their high school counselor right away for more information. They will work with students to determine if the ASCENT Program is right for them. **Applications are due December 10, 2012.**