



Frequently Asked Questions

Commissioner's Letter to Students Encouraging Participation in Rigorous Courses

Why did my high schooler receive a letter from the Commissioner of Education?

Your child received the letter because they have demonstrated through past performance that they can do well in rigorous courses in high school.

What are rigorous courses?

Rigorous courses include Advanced Placement (AP) courses, an International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and/or dual-enrollment courses offered in partnership with Connecticut's universities and colleges. Additionally, students may consider, if available in their high school, earning the [Connecticut State Seal of Biliteracy](#) by demonstrating high proficiency in English and one or more other languages.

My student is already taking rigorous courses in high school. Should I do anything different?

No. You can view the letter simply as an affirmation of your child's good work. Congratulations!

What are the benefits to students for taking rigorous courses in high school?

Students who take such courses benefit in many ways. They can:

- earn college credit while in high school;
- potentially skip introductory courses;
- save money on postsecondary tuition;
- learn exciting subjects in greater depth; and
- set themselves apart when they pursue college or career opportunities.

How was my high school student identified to receive this letter?

Your child was identified because they did well on the Smarter Balanced tests in middle school. Our data show that students who do well on these tests also do well in high school. Of course, succeeding in such courses requires not only strong academic preparation but also Habits of Mind such as a willingness to engage, persist, think critically, and work together with peers.

Who can I talk to about the courses my student is taking in high school?

Please talk to your child's high school counselor.

Do these rigorous courses cost money? Is financial assistance available?

While the courses themselves should not cost money, there may be a cost for exams or other fees associated with some of these courses. Some financial assistance is available. For example, state-level subsidies allow students from low-income families to take AP exams at no cost. Districts may offer other financial supports. Please check with your school for availability and eligibility.

How long has the state been sending such letters to students?

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has been sending similar letters for nine years. In the past, letters were sent to identified students in Grades 10 and 11 in the spring. This year, letters were sent to identified students in Grades 9 and 10 in January. This earlier notification should give students, families, and schools more time to plan a high school pathway that best challenges students and matches their individual interests.