

What is accelerated learning?

Accelerated learning is the opportunity to earn college credit while in high school. Accelerated learning programs expose students to the benefits of postsecondary education and help prepare them for it. Increasingly popular both nationally and in Oregon, the vast majority of Oregon public high schools now offer students opportunities to earn college credit while in high school. Accelerated learning programs can provide a bridge to postsecondary education by facilitating a college-going culture, expanding access to postsecondary education, helping prepare students academically for that postsecondary experience, and enabling students to accrue credit toward a college certificate or degree.

The success of accelerated learning also rests on the assumption that credits earned during high school will transfer seamlessly to colleges or universities and will apply to requirements there. This, in turn, would reduce the time students need to complete a certificate or degree and the costs of postsecondary education. Without seamless transfer, accelerated learning credits could count against the credit limit of federal financial aid without contributing to degree requirements. In 2018, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 4053 to examine the acceptance of accelerated college credit by Oregon's public colleges and universities.

Types of Accelerated Learning



High school-based partnerships

- Dual credit
- Sponsored dual credit
- Assessment-based learning



Other programs

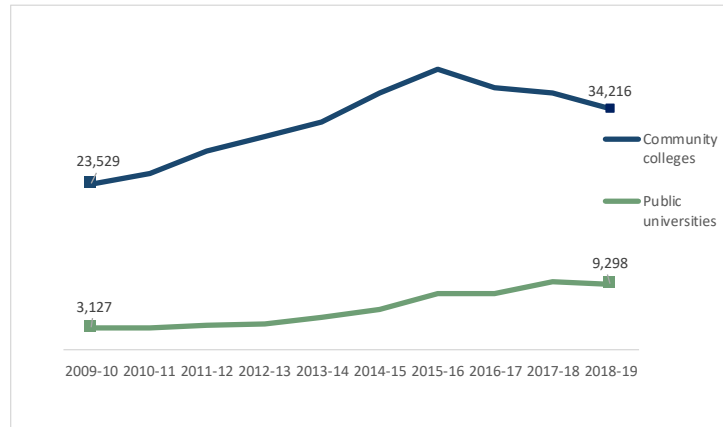
- Expanded Options for high school students taught at a college
- Online courses
- Advanced Placement (AP)
- International Baccalaureate (IB)

For definitions, see:

<https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Documents/Reports/HB4053-Accelerated-Learning-Report-2019.pdf>

Who can access accelerated learning?

Most high schools offered it, but access was not equitable



Accelerated learning has risen over time, though enrollment has evened out in the last few years. In 2018-19, 22 of the 24 public colleges and universities offered high school-based partnerships, enrolling over 40,000 students in more than 4,000 class sections at their local high school each year. Those who participate take three to four classes per year, on average. Students from all backgrounds participated in these and other kinds of accelerated learning, but many in historically underserved groups appear underrepresented. Students who are Black/African American, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific

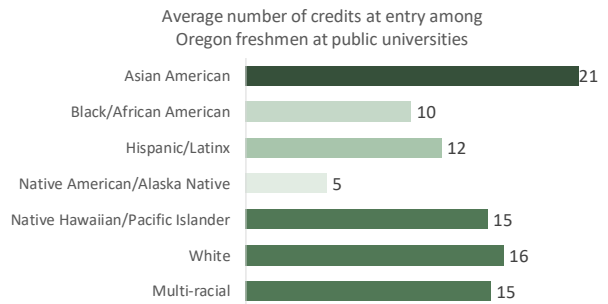
Islander, from rural counties, or from low-income families appear less likely to be accessing accelerated learning than white, urban, and higher-income students. The racial/ethnic gap has widened recently as new HS-based partnerships with public universities have drawn more white and urban students. Although differences in the way high schools and colleges report students' race/ethnicity and income status limit our understanding, there is not any strong evidence that accelerated learning has helped close racial/ethnic and other gaps in education.

How much credit do high school students earn? More than 10 credits

By the time Oregon students graduate from high school, the average graduate has earned an estimated 10.4 college credits through HS-based partnerships, with most credits from partnerships with community colleges (8.6 credits). This includes graduates who do not participate in accelerated learning and earn zero credits. Students earn credit through other types of accelerated learning programs as well (e.g. AP, IB), which adds to this estimate. Indeed, among incoming freshmen at the public universities (where credits from all programs are tallied), Oregon high school graduates start with an average of more than a term of college already under their belt, 15.8 credits.

Accelerated Learning in Oregon

However, this average masks wide differences across students. Only about half of Oregon high school graduates (56%) have any college credit when they start at a public university, and just 27% of Native American/Alaska Native and 37% of Black/African American students arrive with any credit. Students from lower-income families are also less likely than students from higher-income families to start at a university with credit. When students in historically underserved groups start their post-secondary careers with fewer credits, they are at a disadvantage before they even begin their studies. Thus, current limitations and practices in accelerated learning appear to be widening educational inequities rather than reducing them.



Does accelerated learning help students? YES, but benefits are not shared equitably.

Oregon students who participate in accelerated learning programs are more likely to continue on to college or university than students who do not participate. Though other factors contribute to these differences, the findings mirror previous studies that control for these other factors.

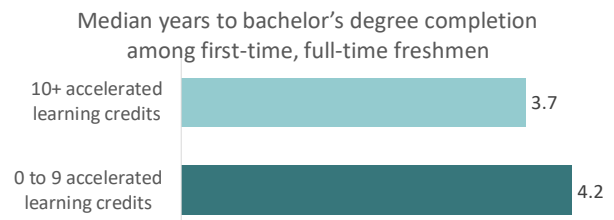


96%
of credits presented to universities were accepted as any form of credit

73%
of accepted credits applied to general education requirements

For students entering public universities, the receiving institutions report they accepted nearly all credit that students presented, 96%. About three-quarters of these accepted credits applied to students' general education requirements, 73%. Remaining credits usually apply as elective credits that students may not need for their degree. However, the amount of credit applied to general education ranged from 61% to 82% across racial/ethnic groups and also varied across institutions, from 52% to 100%.

Finally, students entering public universities with at least ten accelerated learning credits complete their bachelor's degrees sooner, by one-half year, than students who entered with fewer than ten credits. This has financial impacts on both educational costs and the opportunity costs of lost wages.



FINAL TAKEAWAY

Accelerated learning, as it exists today in Oregon, appears to be both beneficial for those enrolled and inequitable for which students gain benefits. While the underlying causes of these inequities are undeniably complex and not limited to education systems, investing in the postsecondary education of underserved students while they are still in high school presents a strategic opportunity to close equity gaps in education. Given the apparent benefits of accelerated learning for students' enrollment, affordability, and time to completion, expanded investment to access these benefits is warranted.

Where to go from here?

- **Access:** Identify ways to expand accelerated learning among racial/ethnic minority and lower-income students
- **Transferability:** Further align accelerated learning opportunities with general education requirements to increase the amount that fulfill degree requirements
- **Equity:** Continue rigorous study of access to and impact of accelerated learning, focusing particularly on equity

For the full report, with additional results, see

<https://www.oregon.gov/highered/research/Documents/Reports/HB4053-Accelerated-Learning-Report-2019.pdf>