

Family CCR Glossary: College and Career Readiness Terms to Know

When talking with families, educators should be mindful that some families do not have much experience with CCR terms and processes. Counselors should take care not to use acronyms or technical language without providing definitions or examples.

Use this list of common CCR terminology with family-facing definitions to help families develop a common understanding. The definitions and explanations are written with a special consideration of the parent perspective and what background knowledge they might have. Before disseminating to families, consider adding any words, programs, or acronyms commonly used in your school, district, or state. You might share the entire list with families or add individual definitions to relevant forms and communication throughout the year.



Advanced placement

Advanced placement courses, sometimes called AP courses, are high school courses that cover college-level material. Students can earn college credit by taking an exam at the end of the course.



CCR

CCR stands for “college and career readiness.” It usually refers to a school or district’s programs, experiences, and resources that are geared toward ensuring that students are ready for life after graduation. CCR offerings and programs can include different courses, experiences, and trainings that help students understand what options are possible after they graduate, figure out what they want to do, and the steps they need to take to make that happen.



Course Selection

Course selection refers to when your child picks their classes for the following school year. Course selection is very important in making sure your child is taking courses that interest them and meeting the requirements so they will be ready to graduate high school and prepared for their next step after high school graduation. It is important for a student to think about their goals for after high school when selecting their courses because different colleges and training programs have different requirements. School counselors can help students understand if the courses they are choosing are appropriate for their goals after high school.



CTE

CTE stands for career and technical education. CTE programs provide students with opportunities to learn and practice career-specific technical and practical skills that will help them to succeed in future jobs. CTE courses might include tourism, computer science, or hospitality. CTE programs sometimes offer students opportunities for hands-on work experiences while still in high school.



Dual enrollment

Dual enrollment programs allow high school students to take college courses while in high school. Students are able to earn both high school credit and college credit at the same time by completing the course. This allows students to start college already having earned college credit.



Financial Aid and assistance

Financial aid is money to help students and families of students pay for educational expenses, most often in college. There are many ways for students to receive financial aid—there are options for grants from many different sources including the federal government, state government, the college or university, and private scholarships. According to national statistics, 85% of college students receive some type of financial aid.



FAFSA

FAFSA, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, is an application that is used to apply for grants, loans, and other federal funding. Some states and colleges use the FAFSA to determine eligibility for state and school aid, too. In order for students to receive aid, parents must complete this application. The application window opens on October 1st and closes on June 30th; students are more likely to qualify for aid if their FAFSA is filed early.



GPA

GPA stands for grade point average and shows the average grades a student has earned since beginning to earn high school credit. Most schools use a 4.0 grading scale where an A=4.0, B=3.0, C=2.0, D=1.0, and F=0.0. A grade point average is calculated by adding up all the accumulated final grades for each semester and dividing that number by the number of total grades earned. Some schools and districts give additional weight to Honors courses, AP courses, and Dual Enrollment courses. A student's GPA might influence college acceptance as well as scholarship awards.



Industry certification

Some schools and districts offer opportunities for students to develop technical skills that can be directly used in career or job settings. Many schools give students opportunities to pass tests or exams to earn professional licenses or that are approved by a local, state, or national agency and certify that a student has a certain set of knowledge and skills. These industry certifications are very good for secondary students to earn as they make them more competitive for career and college opportunities.



Pathway

Pathway is a word used within schools to describe a series of courses, career experiences, and skill building opportunities designed to prepare a student for a future career or area of interest. Sometimes the word “pathway” describes a very specific set of courses combined with career experiences in a particular field. These might include an engineering pathway, hospitality pathway, or business management pathway. Other times, the word “pathway” is used as a general term to describe a college-going path or a straight-to-career plan and the decisions and requirements to achieve that goal.



Prerequisite

A prerequisite is a specific course that must be completed before a student is able to take another course or participate in a program or experience. The purpose of a prerequisite is to ensure that students have the necessary knowledge and skills to take a higher-level class or take part in a special program. It is important to be aware of prerequisite requirements so that students can make sure they are able to participate in opportunities or courses that interest them.



Resume

A resume is a document that lists work experience, extracurricular activities, service positions and hours, skills, industry certifications, and awards or honors. It is often used when applying for jobs, scholarships, or college admissions. It is a good idea for high school students to create a resume during freshman year and add to it as they gain skills and earn accomplishments.



Transcript

A high school transcript is a record of courses students have completed, the grades for each semester, the student's GPA, standardized test scores, and a student's attendance throughout high school. Students often need to share a copy of their transcript when applying for college, scholarships, or training programs and usually must request a copy from the school.



Work based learning

Work-based learning includes any kind of learning experience that places students in real-world workplace settings. They can range from a one-day visit to an office where students observe other professionals to internships to students working as an actual employee. These kinds of experiences can be very powerful for students as they allow them to explore potential career interests and help them determine whether they want to someday work in a particular field.