

State Board of Education Foundational Questions for the CORE 24 Implementation Task Force (ITF)

The Implementation Task Force Charter directed the ITF to produce recommendations with analyses of advantages and disadvantages regarding implementation issues that included:

- An implementation schedule that prioritizes phase-in of new credit requirements
- Ways to operationalize competency-based methods of meeting graduation requirements
- Ways to assist struggling students with credit retrieval and advancing their skills to grade level
- Phasing in of CORE 24 to address issues such as teacher supply, facility infrastructure, etc.
- Ways to provide appropriate career preparation courses, as well as career concentration options
- Scheduling approaches to 24 credits that can meet the required 150 instructional hours

In September, the Board will receive a preliminary, interim report with ITF recommendations on the issues considered by the ITF to date. The Board will take no action on the report. The purpose of the report is to inform the Board of the Task Force's thinking, and to formalize the draft recommendations so that input can be sought from stakeholders. **The ITF may revise these recommendations before presenting them in a final report to the Board next March, based on feedback or further reflection.**

At the meeting on August 14, 2009, ITF members will be asked to discuss and take an informal vote on each draft recommendation. To facilitate that discussion, this document puts forward recommendations that have emerged from previous meetings. ITF members will have the opportunity to discuss and amend the recommendations prior to a vote. The following questions, taken from the ITF Charter, frame the work of the ITF thus far.

1. What is the optimal strategy for phasing in the CORE 24 requirements, beginning with the graduating class of 2013 and becoming fully implemented with the graduating class of 2016?

The ITF will discuss this issue at the August 14 meeting and continue the discussion at the September 28 meeting, if needed.

2. What flexibility, if any, is needed to make CORE 24 requirements work for all students, e.g., ELL learners, IB diploma candidates, struggling students, etc.?

The ITF will be addressing this issue primarily at its September 28 and November 2 meetings.

However, in the context of a related discussion on flexibility, centering on competency-based credit, the ITF believes the SBE should consider amending the WAC defining a high school credit to further define competency-based credit. The current definition reads: Satisfactory demonstration by a student of clearly identified competencies established pursuant to a process defined in written district policy. Districts are strongly advised to

confirm with the higher education coordinating board that the award of competency-based high school credit meets the minimum college core admissions standards set by the higher education coordinating board for admission into a public, baccalaureate institution.

To this definition, add language such as the following: A high school credit shall mean the student has successfully completed a state-developed or state-approved summative assessment for a CORE 24 subject. “Successful completion” is determined by the cut scores established by the State Board of Education on state assessments required for graduation, or at the local level for assessments not required for graduation.

Advantages

- Permits students who meet proficiency on end-of-course state assessments to earn credit, even if they fail the course.
- Provides guidance to districts about competency-based credit.

Disadvantages

Permits students who meet proficiency on end-of-course state assessments to earn credit, even if they fail the course.

3. What conventional and out-of-the-box ideas should the SBE consider to implement CORE 24?

The ITF has considered two policies to date that will increase the flexibility of schools to implement CORE 24.

- a. Policy #1: The SBE should consider eliminating the time-based WAC definition of a credit and reinforce instead the connection between a credit and student learning: “A high school credit shall mean the student has demonstrated proficiency in the identified learning outcomes of a course approved by the district as meeting the relevant state subject-area standards.”

Advantages

- Consistent with the state’s direction toward standards-based learning
- Does not artificially connect learning to time
- Creates more flexibility for districts to focus on student-centered learning that will enable students to progress at their own rates
- Acknowledges the realities of online learning, where learning is not time-based
- Eliminates existing inconsistencies created by differences in schedules; evidence suggests that the time-based requirement varies across districts, depending on the type of schedule the schools are following, and is not being met by all districts
- Eliminates inconsistencies in the ways districts define and count “instructional hours”

Disadvantages

A time-based requirement:

- is objective, measureable and easy to understand
- may act as an equalizer—a form of standardization that reduces the likelihood that districts will cut corners
- provides a minimum, measurable threshold of expectation

- b. Policy #2. Consider implementing a “2 for 1” or “Credit Plus” policy that would enable students taking classes formally identified as course equivalents to document the academic credit on the transcript and satisfy a CTE requirement at the same time, thereby creating space for an additional elective.

Advantages

- Provides greater flexibility for students to take other courses they need or want to take
- Provides greater flexibility for students in skills centers
- Will encourage districts to establish course equivalencies, and the process of collaboration among teachers to establish equivalencies could contribute to professional learning communities

Disadvantages

- Without clear state parameters, the policy could be interpreted inconsistently across districts and make it difficult for students to transfer credits across schools
- Might require changes to standardized transcript

4. What scheduling approaches assure sufficient opportunities for students to earn 24 credits and meet the definition of instructional hour credit, established in rule?

The ITF recognizes that CORE 24 could work with both standard and block schedules, but the current time-based requirement creates inconsistencies across different types of schedules in the number of instructional hours typically provided. Policies (such as those cited above in #3) might be needed to assure that whatever type of schedule a school adopted, and whatever needs specific groups of students might have, they could still meet the requirements of CORE 24. The ITF will revisit these discussions at its upcoming meetings.

5. What should the career concentration requirement look like in practice?

The ITF believes the career concentration should integrate both academic and CTE/occupational courses with sufficient flexibility to address students’ interests in a variety of ways. An example of how this might be stated is: Fulfill three (3) credits of career concentration courses by taking: CTE courses; credited, work-based learning experiences; approved independent study, and/or general education courses that prepare students for postsecondary education based on their identified program of study in their high school and beyond plan. One of the three credits should meet the standards of an exploratory CTE course.

Advantages

- Provides sufficient flexibility to address different students’ needs
- Retains core (employability and leadership skills) of occupational education requirement
- Connects High School and Beyond Plan (HS&B) with course selection

Disadvantages

- Relies on a HS&B planning process that may not exist yet in some schools

6. What issues need to be addressed in order for the High School and Beyond Plan to begin in middle school?

These issues will be addressed at the February meeting of the ITF. (Date still to be determined).