

High School Credit

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1. What is the role of the State Board of Education (SBE) in defining credits?

The SBE defines high school credit in WAC 180-51-050.

2. What is the definition of a high school credit?

WAC 180-51-050 defines a high school credit to mean:

(1) Grades nine through twelve or the equivalent of a four-year high school program, or as otherwise provided in RCW 28A.230.090(4):

(a) Successful completion, as defined by written district policy, of courses taught to the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards). If there are no state-adopted learning standards for a subject, the local governing board, or its designee, shall determine learning standards for the successful completion of that subject; or

(b) Satisfactory demonstration by a student of proficiency/competency, as defined by written district policy, of the state's essential academic learning requirements (learning standards).

3. When did SBE remove the 150 hour, time-based definition of a high school credit?

SBE adopted the new rule in November 2011. The change was part of SBE's overall review of graduation requirements and move towards a career- and college-ready graduation requirements framework.

The recommendation to change the time-based definition of a credit emerged from the work of the Implementation Task Force (ITF), a group of education practitioners appointed by SBE to recommend policy changes needed to implement new graduation requirements. The ITF recommended that a non-time-based policy would:

- Place the focus on student-centered learning.
- Allow districts more flexibility to meet the increased credit requirements.
- Allow districts to determine, and individualize, how much course time is needed for students to meet the state's standards.

4. Is there a uniform state policy on how each district should define a credit?

Districts can base their definition on criteria they stipulate in policy, such as:

- Earning a passing grade according to the district's grading policy; and/or
- Demonstrating competency/proficiency/mastery of content standards as determined by the district; and/or
- Successfully completing an established number of hours of planned instructional activities defined by the district.

5. Can a district continue to use time as the basis for a credit?

Yes. The change does not prevent a district from using a time-based definition, but it does provide greater flexibility for districts to restructure the school day. Districts can define credit by all of the criteria listed in question #4. If a district chooses to include a time-based component, the previous 150 instructional hour definition offers a starting point for district discussion.

6. Do districts still need to provide students with a minimum district-wide annual average of 1,000 hours of instruction?

Yes. (The 1,000 hours will eventually increase to 1,080 hours, but not before the 2014-15 school year, per ESSB 5919, passed in 2011.)

7. What is the difference between a credit that is defined strictly on the basis of competency (proficiency), and one that is defined using other criteria (earning a passing grade, demonstration of proficiency/mastery, time)?

Competency-based credit is awarded solely on the basis of meeting a preset level of proficiency on a set of standards; how much time the student took to meet the standard is immaterial. In lieu of grades, evaluative terms like "met standard," "exceeded standard," or "not met standard" are often used. Students can earn competency-based credit without the benefit of a classroom experience by demonstrating proficiency on knowledge acquired outside of a classroom setting.

Non competency-based credit is awarded on the basis of meeting expectations that may incorporate factors (e.g., effort, homework completion, behavior, attendance, class participation, etc.) in addition to meeting an established performance standard. Evaluation is

usually in the form of grades that are based on a pre-determined scale. Students earn this type of credit after participating in a classroom-based experience.

8. Does the change from a time-based definition of a credit affect a district's apportionment funding?

If a district ends up reducing its instructional time, there could be a reduction in claimable FTEs, especially as it relates to part time students. For instance, if a student is enrolled in a single daily scheduled class which is scheduled for 60 minutes, it would be claimed for a 0.20 FTE. If the time is reduced to 45 minutes then the calculation of FTE generates only a 0.15 FTE. Districts should work with their business officers to determine any potential impact to district funding for changes to instructional time.

9. Does scheduled time for advisories or the culminating project count as instructional time?

It depends on how the time is structured. Generally, if all students are in a classroom with a teacher guiding the students through an established curriculum (such as Navigation 101) or on a focused project, then it counts as instructional time. If students are in a classroom that allows students to self-direct their time (e.g., study hall), then it would not count as instructional time. A good rule of thumb for what counts as instructional time is to ascertain whether the experience will appear on the student's high school transcript. If it's on the transcript, chances are it represents instructional time.

10. How do students transfer credits between districts if the methods of calculating a credit are all different?

Because districts have different bell schedules, the time basis for a credit has often varied among districts, as have the definitions districts have used to determine what constitutes "planned instructional activities." Districts will continue to make local decisions about what to accept and how much credit to award to students who transfer from other districts.

11. Can a district offer credit for classes shorter than the "traditional" class period of 45-55 minutes?

Yes. It is the district's responsibility to determine how it will measure learning outcomes. A non time-based policy shifts the emphasis from time to rigor and places responsibility on districts to assure that rigorous standards are applied to all courses, and that the time needed to achieve those standards is provided.

12. How does a district know if the student has met standard?

A non time-based policy shifts the emphasis from time and rigor and places responsibility on districts to assure that rigorous standards are applied to all courses, and that the time needed to achieve those standards is provided. Districts may decide, for example, that they know that a student has met standard when:

- The student has successfully completed all of the course requirements to the satisfaction of the instructor.
- The student has mastered subject area standards as determined by their performance on classroom-based and district assessments.

13. Can a district issue partial credit for work completed?

Decisions about how much credit to award are determined locally, according to local district policy.

14. How are high school credit and college credit equivalent?

WAC [180-51-050](#) establishes equivalencies for college credit and high school credit, specifying that five quarter or three semester hours of college and university course work designated at the 100 level or above by the college or university shall equal one high school credit.

15. How are credit equivalencies calculated by school districts when students are enrolled in community and technical college (CTC) high school completion programs and the district is awarding the diploma?

A district will award a minimum of .5 and a maximum of 1.0 high school credit for every five quarter of three semester hours of CTC high school completion course work, provided that the CTC course work is designated below the 100 level by the college.

16. Under what circumstances can a student earn high school credit prior to ninth grade?

RCW [28A.230.090](#) defines the circumstances for earning high school credit prior to ninth grade. Sections 4 and 5 of the law state:

(4) If requested by the student and his or her family, a student who has completed high school courses before attending high school shall be given high school credit which shall be applied to fulfilling high school graduation requirements if:

(a) The course was taken with high school students, if the academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and eighth grade classes, and the student has successfully passed by completing the same course requirements and examinations as the high school students enrolled in the class; or

(b) The academic level of the course exceeds the requirements for seventh and eighth grade classes and the course would qualify for high school credit, because the course is similar or equivalent to a course offered at a high school in the district as determined by the school district board of directors.

(5) Students who have taken and successfully completed high school courses under the circumstances in subsection (4) of this section shall not be required to take an additional competency examination or perform any other additional assignment to receive credit.