



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.

Title: Competency-based Approaches to Credit Retrieval

As Related To:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards.
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy Leadership	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication
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<input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	

Policy Considerations / Key Questions:

Key questions include:

- How can competency-based approaches be used for credit retrieval and for strengthening pathways to a 24-credit diploma?
- What should the Board’s role be in supporting an effective system of competency-based credit?

Possible Board Action:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt
<input type="checkbox"/> Approve	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other

Materials Included in Packet:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memo
<input type="checkbox"/> Graphs / Graphics
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Third-Party Materials
<input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint

Synopsis:

At the State Board of Education’s (SBE) September 2015 meeting, the Board will hear from a panel composed of:

- Dr. Alan Burke, Executive Director, Washington State School Directors Association
- Mr. Scott Seaman, Director of High School Programs and Professional Development Specialist, Association of Washington School Principals
- A student in the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program

The purpose of this panel is to inform the Board on a range of views of competency-based crediting models, competency-based crediting to strengthen pathways to a 24-credit high school diploma, and possible improvements to competency-based crediting that would help student achievement. Competency-based learning may permit a credit-deficient student to recover credit outside of time spent in school and allow the student to get back on-track to graduate. The Board will have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in a discussion with panelists and consider next steps concerning competency-based crediting.



COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACHES TO CREDIT RETRIEVAL

Policy Considerations

At the State Board of Education's (SBE) September 2015 meeting, the Board will hear from a panel composed of:

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Key questions for the Board to consider may include:

- How can competency-based approaches be used for credit retrieval and for strengthening pathways to a 24-credit diploma?
- What should the Board's role be in supporting an effective system of competency-based credit?

What is competency-based credit?

The Competency-Based Learning memo prepared for the July 2015 Board packet contains a discussion of the definition of "Competency-based learning" (CBL), advantages of and concerns about CBL, initiatives in other states, and competency-based provisions in Washington. The memo starts on page 78 of the July Board Meeting Memo (within the Strategic Planning section of the online packet): <http://www.sbe.wa.gov/documents/BoardMeetings/2015/July/04StrategicPlanning.pdf>.

For the purposes of this memo and the discussion at the September Board meeting, competency-based credit will broadly refer to credit earned by students through demonstration of knowledge and skills and acquired through a more flexible approach to learning than scheduled classroom instruction.

A core aspect of competency-based learning is that students acquire knowledge and skills at their own pace, unrelated to seat time. This de-linkage of credit acquisition to classroom time makes competency-based credit an attractive option to explore for credit recovery. A credit-deficient student has limited classroom time left in his or her high school career to earn the credits needed for graduation. With 24 credits required for graduation for the Class of 2019 and beyond, students who attend a school with a traditional six-period day (approximately half of schools currently) will need to earn a credit in each of the six periods for four years to graduate within four years. If a student fails one or more classes, as many students do, the student will probably need to recover credit outside of the six-period day. Competency-based learning may permit a credit-deficient student to recover credit outside of time spent in school and allow the student to get back on-track to graduate.

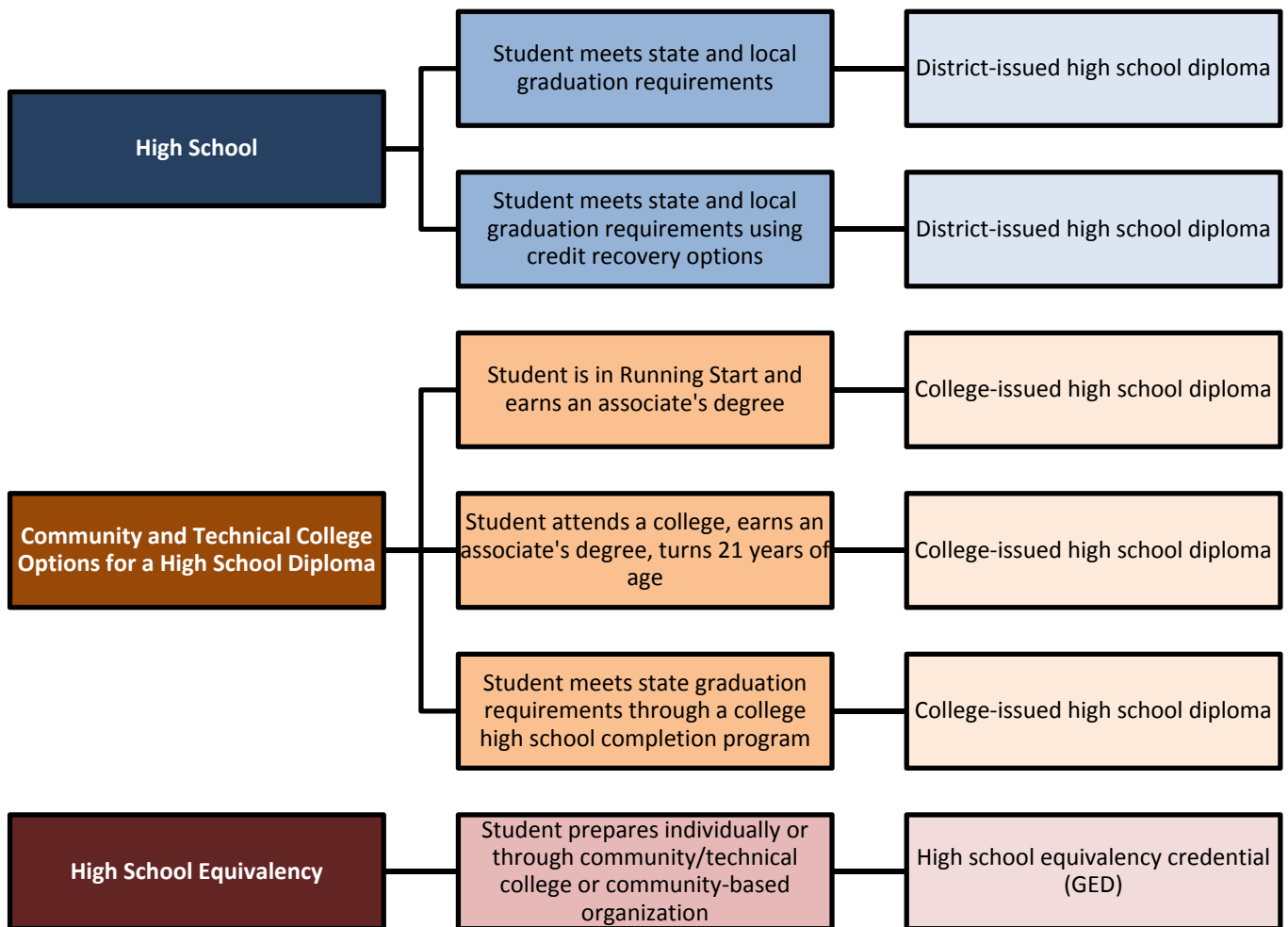
Dropout reengagement and earning a high school credential in Washington

OSPI's [April 2015 Graduation and Dropout Statistics Annual Report](#) reports that of students who entered 9th grade in 2009-2010, 12,985 dropped out within five years (the five-year adjusted cohort dropouts). What happened to these young people? What options do they have to reengage in education?

In Washington, school districts may issue high school diplomas. In addition, under rules adopted by the SBE ([WAC 180-51-053](#)), community and technical colleges may award high school diplomas. Students who do not earn a diploma may earn a high school equivalency certificate by demonstrating their knowledge and skills through a series of tests. Washington uses GED® tests as the high school equivalency test. Figure 1 shows different pathways students may take to earn a high school credential. Students who are unable to recover credit in high school may use one of the non-high school pathways to earn a diploma or a high school equivalency certificate.

The SBE has authority over the eligibility of students aged 16 to 19 to earn a high school equivalency certificate and has written rules regulating this ([WAC Chapter 180-96](#)).

Figure 1: Public education youth pathways to a high school credential



In addition to youth pathways, community and technical colleges have programs for adults to earn a high school diploma. One such program, High School 21+, is a competency-based high school equivalency program for adults. Credit might be awarded based on:

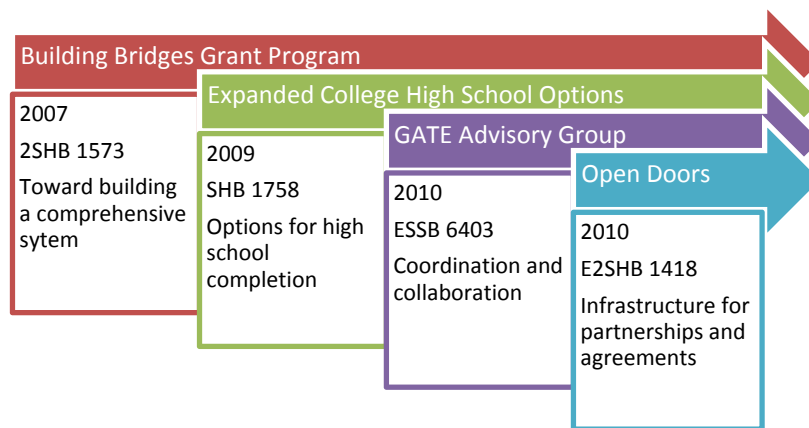
- High school and college transcript credits
- Work, life, military experience
- Prior learning portfolio
- Test results

The High School 21+ program process could inform competency-based crediting in high schools.

Significant Legislation

Figure 2 summarizes significant legislation for dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval. In 2007 the Legislature created the Building Bridges grant program to begin a phase-in of a statewide comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention, and retrieval system. Legislation passed in 2009 (SHB 1758) expanded the options of community and technical colleges to award high school diplomas under the conditions described in Figure 1. In 2010, ESSB 6403 directed OSPI to create a collaborative workgroup to advise and coordinate a comprehensive, integrated, multi-layered system of dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement. This led to the creation of the GATE advisory group (Graduation A Team Effort). Also in 2010, E2SHB 1418 created a statutory framework for a statewide dropout re-engagement system focused on youth aged 16 to 21. The legislation directed OSPI to develop model inter-local agreements between Educational Service Districts, school districts, community or technical colleges, or community-based organization. Programs built around such partnerships or agreements are called Open Doors Youth Reengagement programs or 1418 reengagement programs (there may be unique names for local 1418 programs as well). Approximately 40 such programs are operating around the state. An example of a 1418 program is the Spokane County Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program. Brochures for the program are included as an attachment to this memo, and a student from the Open Doors program will participate on the panel at the September 2015 Board meeting.

Figure 2: Summary of significant dropout prevention, intervention, and reengagement legislation



In addition to Open Doors programs, there are many public and private, state and local, programs that address dropout prevention, intervention and reengagement. A few examples of such programs include:

[JAG—Jobs for Washington’s Graduates \(JWG\)](#). Connects highest-risk students to education and employment.

[GRAD—Graduation, Reality and Dual-Role Skills](#). A program for pregnant teens and young parents.

[Migrant Education Program—MEP](#). A program that helps children of migrant families access high quality education, through supplemental academic programs, health programs, family engagement, credit accrual and exchange, and additional services.

[College Success Foundation](#)—college-readiness supports, particularly for low-income and traditionally underserved student.

There may be the opportunity for awarding competency-based credit to students engaged in program activities. There would be a substantial benefit to at-risk students if opportunities are expanded for earning credit for the activities that help the students stay engaged and in school.

Competency-based Credit in Washington

In 2009, the SBE started exploring competency-based credit for world language. In November 2011, the SBE adopted [WAC 180-51-050](#), which eliminated the time-based definition of a high school credit, and streamlined the process for districts to offer competency credit:

- (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).

To collect information on how districts in Washington offer competency-based credit, the SBE included a question about the topic in a survey sent to districts with the annual basic education compliance form. Of districts with high schools, 82, or 33 percent, stated that they offer competency-based credit in the Basic Education Compliance form survey for 2014-2015. Table 1 summarizes the response of districts and the subject areas in which students may earn competency-based credit.

In 2010, the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) created a model policy for Credit for Competency/Proficiency. The policy was designed for world languages, but could be used a model for districts to expand competency/proficiency-based credit to other subjects. The WSSDA model policy 2409 and procedure 2409P are included as Appendix A in this memo. Of districts that report they offer competency-based credit, some districts adopted or modified the WSSDA model policy, and some districts have adopted their own.

Table 1: Competency-Based Credit Offerings, based on the Basic Education Compliance form survey for 2014-2015.

Subject	Number of Districts	Percentage of all Districts with high schools
World Languages (includes American Sign Language for some districts)	40	16%
Math	21	8.4%

English Language Arts	15	6.0%
All or many subjects are available for competency-based credit.	15	6.0%
Science	12	4.8%
Credit for meeting standard on state assessments. (Awarded in math, ELA or science. Sometimes only awarded to credit-deficient students.)	8	3.2%
PE/Health	4	1.6%
WA State History	2	0.8%
In addition, some districts have credit graduation requirements that may have a competency-based component:		
High School and Beyond Plan	39	15%
Culminating Project	49	20%
Community Service	14	5%

The most commonly offered competency-based credit is in world languages. This is probably because of the SBE's and stakeholders' work in this area, the development of WSSDA's model policy, and the readily available assessments that districts can use for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

In addition to competency-based credit that districts explicitly reported, some credit graduation requirements could have a competency-based component. As shown in Table 1, some districts offer credit for High School and Beyond Plans, Culminating Projects, and community service.

Washington high school transcripts have course codes for students who earn competency credit through passing an exam. In 2014, 6071 students attempted to earn credit through passing a national competency exam, and 1692 students attempted to earn credit through passing a local competency exam. This data indicates that out of the approximately 320,000 high school students, no more than two or three percent are earning competency-based credit each year through taking assessments.

The available data suggests that competency credit is not widely used in Washington. In informal communications with SBE staff, educators in Washington have cited a lack of guidance to expand competency-based options and a lack of time to invest in creating new systems that have an uncertain benefit. Counselors from several districts have indicated that competency credit is infrequently awarded to students in need of credit retrieval on a student-by-student basis.

Options for Credit Retrieval

A memo on the [24-Credit Graduation Requirements Implementation Update](#) was prepared for the May 2015 Board meeting. The memo reported that a prominent concern of districts was credit retrieval for students not on-track to meet requirements. Data on credit accumulation reported in the presentation, as well as the 2008 SBE Transcript study, indicate that 40 to 50 percent of students fail at least one credit during high school. For schools that have a six-period day, supporting all students earning 24 credits may require increasing the capacity for students to earn credit outside of the regular school day.

Under the 24-credit graduation requirements, students who fail one or two credits will be of particular concern to districts. In the past most such students could retake a class because their schedule would

permit retakes, or the students might not need to recover the credit because they failed an elective and there were fewer total credits required. With the new requirements, students who fail one or two credits will need new options.

Some students fail multiple classes, and most likely these students need extra supports. The 24-credit graduation requirements may enlarge the problem of credit retrieval for these students. When 22 credits are required for graduation in a school with a six-period day, a student who fails four classes will need to recover only two credits. But when 24 credits are required for graduation, a student who fails four classes will need to recover all four credits. A district may mitigate this for individual students, if the district deems the student to have “unusual circumstances.” The legislation that authorized the SBE to implement the 24-credit requirements in 2014 ([E2SSB 6552](#)) also authorized districts to waive two credits if the student has “unusual circumstances.” WSSDA has created a model policy for the two-credit waiver. The waiver is only for elective classes, since under the 24-credit graduation requirements students will still need to earn the 17 core subject requirements.

Table 2 summarizes some credit retrieval options that districts use in Washington. Not all of these options work for all students, and the availability of options varies by district.

Table 2: Credit Retrieval Options

Options		Comments
Summer school		Sometimes districts can cover the cost of summer school, sometimes they cannot, and students must pay a fee. Because of the cost of summer school, the cost of transportation, and individual student scheduling difficulties, summer school is not an option available to all students.
Before or after school programs		Some students may not be able to access these programs because of transportation or individual student scheduling issues.
Staying in high school longer than four years		Some students may feel economic pressures to leave high school for work. There are also social pressures to finish school with a student’s cohort.
Competency credit:	World language	The most commonly awarded competency-based credit currently.
	High School and Beyond Plan	The High School and Beyond Plan is an important part of the 24 credit requirements. As districts look at increasing the elements of the High School and Beyond Plan, more districts may consider awarding credit for the Plan.
	Culminating Project	The culminating project is no longer a state graduation requirement, but some districts have continued the requirement, and offer credit for it.
	Work-based learning	Federal funds were available in the 1990’s that encouraged work-based learning. Many districts continue to encourage work and

		career exploration through jobs, internships, site visits, and job shadowing, but it does not appear many students are earning credit for working.
	Online instruction	Because online instruction allows students to advance more or less at their own pace, online instruction is often classed with competency-based learning. Online instruction for credit retrieval is a very useful option. Some students need supports besides what is offered online, and not all online options are available to students free of charge.
	PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence)	This program is free for Migrant Students, and available to all students for a fee.
	Independent study	Students may work on their own, but to ensure student learning standards are covered, educators may spend extra time on planning and preparation.
	Project-based learning	As with independent study, to ensure student learning standards are covered, educators may spend extra time on planning and preparation.
	Credit for meeting proficiency in high school state assessments in math, English language arts, or science.	For districts currently offering credit for state assessments, it is most often awarded to students who were not successful in earning credit in the class, but who earned a proficient score on the assessment.

Action

As discussed in the July memo, most states, including Washington, allow for competency-based innovations. Other states, however, are doing more than Washington to actively promote competency-based credit. Should Washington do more and what role should the Board have in that work? The panel discussion at the September 2015 Board meeting will provide an initial opportunity for the Board to consider key questions concerning competency-based crediting. No business item is associated with this agenda item. The Board may consider further actions such as continued research, engaging with an national expert or another state on effective competency-based education, or engaging with stakeholders or partners on creating models for competency-based education, such as exploring a model for credit for the High School and Beyond Plan or for some dropout prevention, intervention and recovery program activities.

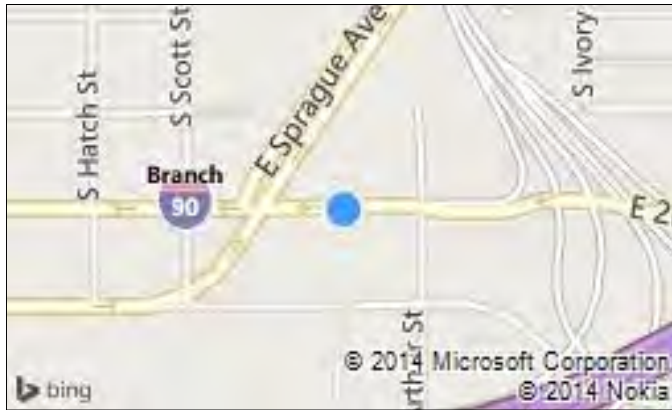
If you have questions regarding this memo, please contact Linda Drake at linda.drake@k12.wa.us.

Next Generation Zone & Open Doors

901 East Second Avenue, Suite 100
Spokane, Washington 99202
509-340-7800
(across the parking lot/fence from WorkSource Spokane)

Bus Information

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Call 509-328-RIDE for specific schedule times.



Spokane County



Youth Reengagement

GED / High School Diploma / Employment Program / College



Spokane County Open Doors Consortium Members



*Every student can learn,
just not on the same day or the same way.
~ George Evans*

Spokane County Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program

What is Open Doors?

Spokane County Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program (referred to as Open Doors) is a new program designed to offer young adults, ages 16-21, who do not yet have a diploma or high school equivalency (GED), an educational option if not attending a traditional high school, for reasons such as being significantly behind in credits.



Take one of two pathways → →

- The high school diploma pathway is through the Gateway to College (GtC) program at Spokane Falls Community College. Not only are students working on their diploma but they are taking college classes and learning how to be college students.
- The GED pathway is located at the Next Generation Zone, where programs center on building college and work readiness skills as well as vocational exploration. These programs, including the GED classroom, have been together in one location since 2007 with much success.

What will I need to do if enrolled in Open Doors?

- Attend the orientation which occurs each Wednesday at 9:00 am to get an overview of the program. You will be asked to complete a reading and math assessment to assist with your education plan.
- Work with a career advisor to determine the education option you are interested in pursuing (high school diploma or GED) and career interests.
- Attend class at a minimum of six (6) hours a week, Monday through Thursday 9:00 am—4:00 pm, (Friday morning is an open lab with an instructor available 9:00 am—12:00 pm) and demonstrate academic progress each month. To progress more quickly toward fulfilling your education and career plan, you should plan to attend more than the required minimum six hours a week. The Gateway to College high school diploma pathway has additional requirements which will be discussed with you by the career advisor.
- There is no cost to participate in this program. Bus passes will be provided if you have no other means of transportation.

Want to learn more?

Next Generation Zone
Monday—Friday 8:00 am—4:30 pm
509-340-7800

Gateway to College (SFCC)
509-533-3474

General Services

Education

- Assessments
- GED classes
- Tutoring and test preparation

Career Skills Training

- Internships
- Job shadowing
- Connect with a mentor
- Career certifications and training
- Budgeting

Career Exploration

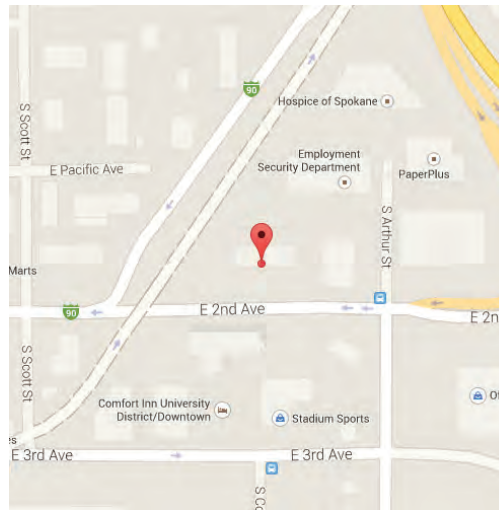
- Career assessments and coaching
- Career skills workshops
- Passport to Career Success

Individual Services

Need just a little help?

Come on in and we can help you:

- Assess your skills
- Explore careers
- Create your résumé
- Practice interview skills
- Search for jobs



If taking the bus from the Plaza, the most direct routes are 94 and 45.

NEXT GENERATION ZONE

901 East 2nd Ave, Suite 100
Spokane, WA 99202
509.340.7800

www.nextgenzone.org

HOURS:

Monday - Friday
8:30am - 4:30pm



Spokane Area
Workforce Development Council

In partnership with the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council, the Next Generation Zone consists of agencies that are equal opportunity employers and providers of employment and training services. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to persons with disabilities.

Washington Relay Service: 711

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Spokane County's only one-stop career center for young adults ages 16–24, offering education, career skills training, and community and employment resources.



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Young adults who are employed when exiting our program are earning an average of

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@NextGenZone



“The lessons here are related to real-life scenarios that I can apply to day-to-day life to help me find a job and career.”

“I am starting to see that the possibilities are endless.”

Credit For Competency/Proficiency

(This policy is designed for competency/proficiency credit in world languages, however, a district can expand the policy to multiple subjects.)

World Languages

The board recognizes the value of preparing students to be global citizens with the skills to communicate in English and other world languages. In our state's diverse communities, it is not unusual for students to have various opportunities to develop language skills, for example, by using the language at home, attending language programs offered in the community, learning online or living abroad. The district encourages students and their families to take advantage of any language learning opportunities available to them.

To enable students to fully benefit from the advantages of multilingualism, the district will encourage students to learn to understand, speak, read and write at a high level of language proficiency. Proficiency can also be demonstrated in languages that are only spoken or signed.

In order to recognize the language proficiency of students, the superintendent is directed to develop procedures for awarding world language credits to students based on demonstrated proficiency across a range of language skills.

Legal References: RCW 28A.230.090

High school graduation requirements or equivalencies — Reevaluation of graduation requirements — Review and authorization of proposed changes — Credit for courses taken before attending high school — Postsecondary credit equivalencies

WAC 180-51-050

High school credit — Definition

Management Resources:

Policy News, August 2010

Competency Based Credits

Adoption Date:
School District Name:
Revised: 8.10; 12.11
Classification: Priority

Credit for Competency/Proficiency

World Languages Credit for Competency/Proficiency

A. Definition:

For purposes of this procedure, a world language is defined according to the definition used by the Higher Education Coordinating Board as “[a]ny natural language that has been formally studied [...], including American Sign Language (AMESLAN, the language of the deaf community), and languages no longer spoken, such as Latin and ancient Greek. However, neither computer 'languages' nor forms of deaf signing aside from AMESLAN are acceptable.”

B. Demonstrating Competency/Proficiency in a World Language

The district will manage the assessment process so that students seeking competency based credit can demonstrate competency/proficiency across language skills.

Assessments will be aligned to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Proficiency Guidelines in order to ensure consistency across languages. The district will select the appropriate assessment instrument(s) from the following:

1. Standards-based Measurement of Proficiency (STAMP) in reading, writing, and speaking (and listening, if available) for all languages for which it is available (as of 2011, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese). STAMP is offered by Avant Assessment (<http://avantassessment.com>).
2. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) assessments Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) or Oral Proficiency Interview Computer Based (OPIc) and Writing Proficiency Test (WPT) — for languages for which STAMP is not available or for which ACTFL assessments are deemed to be more appropriate. ACTFL assessments are offered through Language Testing International (<http://www.languagetesting.com>).
3. Appropriate assessments for American Sign Language such as the Sign Language Proficiency Interview (SLPI).
4. For languages that do not currently have any other nationally available proficiency based assessment, the district will work with local language communities and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) World Languages Program to develop a collection of evidence process, such as LinguaFolio, that is aligned with ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines.

C. Determining Competency and Credit Equivalencies

The district will award one or more credits based on the student demonstrating an overall proficiency level according to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines as follows:

1. Novice Mid – 1 credit (Carnegie Unit)
2. Novice High – 2 credits
3. Intermediate Low – 3 credits
4. Intermediate Mid – 4 credits

Since students may demonstrate varied levels of proficiency across skills, credits will be awarded based on the lowest common level of proficiency demonstrated across the skill areas.

(Example: If a student demonstrated Intermediate Mid level proficiency in Speaking, but Novice Mid in Reading and Writing, then credits would be awarded based on the lowest common level of demonstrated proficiency: one credit for Novice Mid. The student would not receive individual credits for separate language skills. In this example, the student

would not receive four credits for Intermediate Mid in Speaking and one credit each for Novice Mid in Reading and Writing. The total award is one World Language credit.)

D. Offering Testing Opportunities

The district will manage the assessment process so that students have multiple (*district may insert here the number of opportunities*) opportunities to take or retake the assessment(s) required to demonstrate proficiency. Assessments must be offered in a proctored setting with appropriate technology. The district will approve the site(s) where the assessments are offered, which could include individual schools, district buildings, community colleges, universities, educational service districts, or other community settings.

E. Paying for Assessments

The district will set a fee for the assessments to cover administrative costs, test fees, and/or proctoring. Fees may vary depending on the assessment costs. The district will offer financial assistance to students who demonstrate need, such as qualifying for free or reduced price lunch. (*Insert language here if the district plans to pay the assessment fee or subsidize the student's cost.*)

Current fees and financial assistance information are available from (*insert specific district location here*).

(*Insert assessment fee schedule here.*)

F. Reporting Results

The district will receive official test results for each student participating in the assessment process. The district will provide a letter to the student with a copy of the test results and an indication of how many world language credits, if any, may be awarded. If requested by the student, the school counselors will record the world language credits earned on the official transcript. Credits will be awarded with a grade of "Pass."

Guiding Questions for the Competency-based Credit Panelists:

Questions for the student in the Open Doors Youth Reengagement Program, Next Generation Zone:

1. What led you to leave high school?
2. What could the school or district have done to help you stay in school?
3. What might have helped you earn the credits needed for graduation?

Questions for educators:

1. In 2011, the Washington State Board enacted competency-based crediting by removing the 150 hr. seat-time requirement for awarding of high school credit (WAC 180-51-050). In your role, what changes have you seen, if any, as a result of this regulatory change?
2. What best practices have emerged in this area? What schools or districts are utilizing competency-based models in innovative ways that improve student outcomes?
3. What potential does competency-based crediting have to strengthen pathways to the 24 credit high school diploma, in particular, for credit deficient students who are motivated to earn a diploma with their graduating class through out-of-class crediting options, rather than dropping out or earning a GED?
4. What improvements could be made to competency-based crediting to help the state achieve its student achievement goals? What role can the state board and other stakeholders play in making these improvements?