



Questions and Answers from the “Graduation Requirements Rules” Webinar

Held August 6, 2020 (find the [webinar recording online](#))

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1. "Districts would still need to adopt a written policy" -- does this policy then have to be vetted/approved by the State Board of Education (SBE)?

These proposed rules do not change current law. Currently (and under the new rules), districts need to adopt a written policy before providing mastery/competency-based credit. But, districts do not need to have their local district policy approved by SBE.

2. Will districts get access to mastery based best practices or guidelines?

Washington State has a [mastery-based learning \(MBL\) work group](#), who has been tasked by the Legislature to provide recommendations by December 2020 around the expansion of mastery-based credits and development of mastery-based pathways to the earning of a high school diploma. In the midst of school building closures due to coronavirus, the work group encouraged SBE to put some of the mastery-based crediting concepts into rule that could be helpful to school districts now.

The MBL work group has frequently discussed the importance of providing learning opportunities (including sharing of best practices) for educators, to be able to implement MBL opportunities widely. As the MBL work moves forward in our state, the work group hopes to be able to provide resources to districts in the future around best practices.



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If you have suggestions about mastery-based best practices that you would like to share with the work group, please email [Alissa Muller](#) (who provides staff support to the work group).

3. You refer to different organizations and districts as responsible for implementation of these rules - can you explain more about the SBE's role within this larger context? Can SBE provide guidance on these rules?

Yes—it is SBE's role (and authority) to provide guidance on the rules we adopt. However, these rules may have a tangential impact on parts of the education system that SBE does not have authority over. For instance, SBE's proposed rules on mastery-based crediting will have an impact on a student's high school transcript. OSPI has the authority over the state's [standardized transcript](#).

Additionally, the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA) provides resources to school district boards to help them in implementing new policies. One of the resources that WSSDA provides is model policies—and WSSDA has previously created [model policies for mastery-based crediting](#). After SBE adopts final rules, WSSDA will update their model policies to assist districts in implementing these rules on mastery-based crediting.

4. Will there be guidance on how to transcribe mastery-based crediting for completion of the next rigorous course? We do have policy for competency-based credit and use the codes to indicate mastery demonstrated through a national or local assessment, but we don't have guidance for something other than assessment (no guidance for next level course completion).

OSPI is the agency responsible for providing transcript guidance. However, SBE will work with OSPI on the mastery-based crediting transcript issue raised in this question.

5. Will MBL replace the seat hour requirements for graduation?

Washington State does not have a seat hour requirement as part of the definition of a credit—so there is not a state requirement to provide a specified number of hours of instruction before awarding a student a credit. Once a student demonstrates they have met the state learning standards for a course, it is appropriate to award the student the credit.



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However, our state's funding and allocation model does have certain time requirements. Because of this, MBL could have funding implications. SBE and OSPI have been tasked by the Legislature to development enrollment reporting guidelines to address these challenges.

Additionally, the state's MBL work group may also choose to make a recommendation about funding in their final report due December 2020.

6. In the Mastery-based Credit options, does the instructor need to be endorsed in both areas of learning standards they are offering credit for?

The endorsement a teacher holds is not a determining factor in whether or not a student can earn high school credit for a specific course. The awarding of credit is based on the learning standards addressed in the course ([WAC 180-51-050](#)). If the district determines a particular course addresses high school learning standards, then the district may award high school credit.

In some MBL models where a course addresses two different content area's learning standards, the course is team taught by experts in each content area.

7. Have you considered the implications under ESSA that schools and districts would need to report to OSPI these out-of-endorsement teachers under MBC? And that districts must address disparate impact if students with disabilities, English language learners, et al are being taught by out-of-endorsement teachers in high percentages?

SBE has been coordinating with the Professional Educator Standards Board regarding educator endorsement policy and will continue to do so as the MBL work group moves toward final recommendations.

8. Students can only receive credit in one credit area-correct? Students cannot receive double credit for one class.

Generally, students receive one credit per one-year course, or one-half credit for a semester course. However, the amount of credit awarded is locally determined, and should be based on the breadth and depth of learning standards addressed.



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A district may design a single course, for which the student earns one credit, but meets more than one subject area graduation requirement—such as a course that is a Career and Technical Education course equivalency, or a course that is locally determined to meet more than one subject area graduation requirement.

A district could design a learning experience where students receive instruction during one course period, but the breadth and depth of learning standards addressed and the work the student does is determined locally to be the equivalent of two courses.

Students may demonstrate their learning through a mastery-based assessment. In this case, the student may earn two credits.

9. Is it possible to offer a statewide Washington State History (WSH) virtual or pre-recorded course that students can opt into from any location?

There is no statewide Washington State History course available. However, there are approved [online providers](#) that offer Washington State History.

10. You are making an exception for WSH because of emergency school closures. Why did you single out Washington State History? Doesn't the closure apply to all classes offered, including all classes that meet graduation requirements?

Washington State History is different from other state subject area requirements in that it is a non-credit requirement that most students meet in middle school through a middle school-level course. The proposed rules allow districts to waive Washington State History for students who missed taking the course because of school closures and were unable to make-up the course in high school. The purpose of the rule change is so that high school students who have met all other requirements and completed a 4-year high school program will not be prevented from graduating because they missed taking a middle school course.

It is not anticipated that many students will need this waiver. Districts must provide the opportunity for students to make up Washington State History.

11. Can you please clarify how students are getting 1/2 credit for WHS if they take it in middle school? Does it now automatically go on their high school transcript due to the new rules, that has all high school classes taken in middle school automatically count?

Students who successfully complete Washington State History at a high school level, aligned to high school learning standards, as determined locally, may be awarded high school credit for the course. If a student successfully completes a high school-level



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course in middle school, the student must automatically receive high school credit ([WAC 180-51-030](#)).

12. When would these waivers be available? And what is the timeline for submitting these waivers?

If the State Board of Education adopts its draft rules in September, the waiver of Washington State History could be implemented in Fall 2020. The local district would create their own timeline and process for the waivers.

13. Is there guidance on how districts should go through the process of having a student's class meet more than one subject area credit requirement? A concern is that there would be very relaxed standards on what would count. What is the process for districts to do this?

Districts should develop a thoughtful process, based on learning standards, that relies on the subject area content experts in the district for any subject that is taught with a multidisciplinary approach, where students may meet more than one subject area graduation requirements.

The development of high-quality Career and Technical Education course equivalencies could be used as a model for the process for development of other multidisciplinary approaches.

14. Why not make Washington State History a credit requirement?

Changing the subject area graduation requirements would require a statutory change and cannot be done with a rule change.

15. A rich part of Washington State history is its racial and ethnic diversity--White, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color). How will this gap in education be met? There was an inclusion of "tribal history," but that doesn't cover everyone.

Districts will need to strive to address racial and ethnic diversity, including tribal history, throughout their social studies curricula. All students will still need to take three credits of social studies in high school.



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16. What is the SBE's plan to communicate to students and families the potential negative consequences of using one course to meet multiple credit requirements without earning those multiple credits, especially core academic credit? For example, if a student uses a Physics to meet a math and science requirement, the student may not be able to meet CADR without both of those credits appearing on the transcript.

There should not be a negative consequence to students, but it is an ongoing process to ensure this is the case. Transcribing courses that meet more than one subject area is a challenge, and the transcript may need to change to be able to accurately reflect the student's record of course-taking and the meeting of their distribution requirements. In creating these rules, SBE has had conversations with higher education partners. SBE will continue to partner with higher education, and work with OSPI on the transcript.

As this is an ongoing process, SBE will continue to work with partners to communicate to students and families, as well as work with OSPI and higher education partners on transcript issues.

17. Please clarify, that it's up to each district to give high school credit for WSH taught in middle school? If parents want to advocate for this, they need to get their district to implement this change into their rules? Why not make this a state option so students can earn credits across the whole state and not a district by district implementation?

In Washington, as a local-control state, the authority to identify which courses meet which graduation requirements is a district-level decision. To make Washington State History a high school credit-bearing course that is a credit graduation requirement would require a statutory change that cannot be done in rule.

18. Where will students learn about Washington State civics or rules of government, if they don't take Washington State History? The state has emphasized STEM, but part of public education is to teach citizenship in order to make us better people and better citizens and residents.

This will be a challenge for districts. The civics requirement and the requirement for district to teach the Washington State Constitution are in statute, so districts will need to continue to provide teaching and learning of these topics.



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19. Will there be any additional transcript guidance for students who access the WSH waiver due to COVID other than simply stating Waived?

At this time, no additional guidance is planned for how to address the Washington State History waiver in the transcript. For students who have this requirement waived because of school closure due to the COVID-19 emergency, the transcript may be treated the same as students who have this requirement waived because of residence outside of the state.