



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

Title:	<u>Competency-based Learning for Career and College Readiness</u>	
As Related To:	<input type="checkbox"/> Goal One: Develop and support policies to close the achievement and opportunity gaps. <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Two: Develop comprehensive accountability, recognition, and supports for students, schools, and districts.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Goal Three: Ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet career and college ready standards. <input type="checkbox"/> Goal Four: Provide effective oversight of the K-12 system. <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Relevant To Board Roles:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> System Oversight <input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communication <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Convening and Facilitating
Policy Considerations / Key Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could competency-based learning fit into a career and college-ready framework? • Are there gaps in state policy that need to be addressed to best support rigorous and aligned competency-based crediting? • What guidance would be useful for districts to implement competency-based crediting? 	
Possible Board Action:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Approve	<input type="checkbox"/> Adopt <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Materials Included in Packet:	<input type="checkbox"/> Memo <input type="checkbox"/> Third-Party Materials <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Draft guidance to districts	
Synopsis:	<p>The State Board of Education (SBE) will hear from a national expert and state educators with knowledge and experience with competency-based learning. Alissa Peltzman, Vice President for State Policy and Implementation Support for Achieve, and a panel of state educators will present and participate in Board discussion. The panel will include Kathe Taylor, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching and Learning, Lillian Hunter, Director of Digital Learning, and Dave Sather, Secondary Principal, Lopez Island School District.</p> <p>Guiding questions for panelists were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the various ways, in addition to standardized tests, by which students can demonstrate competencies? • What are the issues for judging quality in a program involving online crediting?—What are some best practices and what are some pitfalls? • What are the policies or guidance gaps that would help districts expand quality opportunities for competency-based credit? <p>The Board discussion with panelists will be used by staff to help develop guidance for districts to create and expand competency-based crediting opportunities. A draft guidance document is included in this section of the packet, that was created with the help of a steering committee that included principals, guidance counselors, and OSPI staff.</p>	

Competency-Based Crediting Handbook 1.0: An Implementation Guide for School Districts

March 2016

Introduction

Purpose and Organization

This handbook is designed to serve as a resource for school districts initiating and implementing policies and procedures for establishing competency-based crediting opportunities for students in accordance with Washington State law. This guide is targeted for district school board members, district administrators, and district leadership teams who are interested in implementing or expanding opportunities for competency-based credit in their district.

Groundwork

The first section of this guide is intended to provide background information on critical issues and principles that form the basis for competency-based crediting. The groundwork section includes :

- The Importance of Competency-Based Crediting
 - 24-Credit Graduation Requirement Framework
 - Career and College Readiness
- The Legal Basis for Competency-Based Crediting

A Framework for Competency-Based Learning

An organizing framework is important for a common understanding of competency-based learning, and for identifying the best tools for implementation.

Key Framework Elements

The sections that follow the groundwork are organized into six framework elements needed for effective implementation of competency-based learning opportunities at the district level. These key elements are:

1. School Board Policy
2. Standards
3. Procedures
4. Assessment
5. Transcription

Frequently Asked Questions and Best Practices

Some districts around the state are already successfully implementing competency-based crediting. Other districts are just beginning to consider competency-based crediting. This section pulls together information from successful implementations as a model for replication, explicates pitfalls to avoid, and addresses common questions asked by districts about competency-based crediting.

Appendices

Materials and resources are provided as appendices in the toolkit. These materials may deepen understanding, address questions, and assist with implementation of the essential elements.

Definition of Competency-based Learning

It is important to establish a common understanding of the term “competency-based learning” as it is used in this toolkit. “Competency-based learning” or “competency-based education” is characterized by the strategies listed in the box below. Some or all of these strategies could be applied in a classroom and could simply be part of good instruction. When these strategies are applied partly or wholly outside of a traditional scheduled class and form the basis for the awarding of valid, rigorous high school credit—this is competency-learning for the purposes of this framework.

Achieve’s Definition of Competency-based pathways:

- Students advance upon demonstration of mastery.
- Competencies include explicit, measurable, transferable learning objectives that empower students.
- Assessment is meaningful and a positive learning experience for students.
- Students receive rapid, differentiated support based on their individual learning needs.
- Learning outcomes emphasize competencies that include the application and creation of knowledge.
- The process of reaching learning outcomes encourages students to develop skills and dispositions important for success in college, careers and citizenship.

From Achieve’s Competency-Based Pathways Working Group, which met in 2012-2013 and was comprised of representative from 11 states, including Washington, and 11 state and national organizations.

Groundwork

The Importance of Competency-based Learning

Washington state has the aspiration that all students who graduate from high school will be career- and college-ready—that they will be ready for whatever post-secondary pathway they wish to pursue. State statute specifies “The purpose of a high school diploma is to declare that a student is ready for success in postsecondary education, gainful employment, and citizenship, and is equipped with the skills to be a lifelong learner.” (RCW 28A.230.090.) To help ensure that student learning is broad and deep enough support these aspirations, the state has adopted new learning standards and new, 24-credit graduation requirements.

As the state transitions to these new requirements, competency-based credit may become a more important, and perhaps a more commonly accessed option for students. 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 for individualizing student learning. Competency-based learning may also be an important tool in keeping students on-track to becoming career and college ready, as well as on-track to graduate.

Competency-based learning, at its best and as defined above, fosters the skills and dispositions important for success in college, careers and citizenship. It provides an opportunity for authentic, deeper learning by students that will build and reinforce critical skills. It engages students by

individualizing their learning and giving them ownership over their educational experience. Arguably, all students should have the opportunity to participate in competency-based learning, either incorporated into traditional classroom learning or as credit earned largely outside of a classroom.

[The Legal Basis for Competency-Based Learning](#) SBE rule WAC 180-51-050 (see Appendix A) defines high school credit and eliminated the time basis for high school credit. This permits districts to offer competency credit. The rule does not dictate how districts should implement competency-based credit. The definition requires two elements:

1. A written district policy, and
2. Student demonstration of competency in state learning standards.

WAC 392-410-300 (see Appendix A) permits credit, including high school graduation credit, to be awarded for “school planned or approved learning experiences primarily conducted away from the facilities owned, operated, or supervised by the district or conducted primarily by individuals not employed by the district.” The “learning experiences” referred to in this rule could be competency-based learning. The rule specifies elements that should be in the written policy permitting the awarding of such credit.

Important Rules for
Competency-Based
Learning (see Appendix A):

[**WAC 180-51-050**](#)
[**High school credit—Definition**](#)

[**WAC 392-410-300**](#)
[**Equivalency course of study—**](#)
[**Credit for learning experiences**](#)
[**conducted away from school or**](#)
[**by persons not employed by the**](#)
[**school district.**](#)

A Framework for Competency-Based Learning

Washington rules that apply to competency-based learning permit different kinds of competency-based learning, which we have organized according to the framework depicted below. Within this framework two types of competency-based learning are identified:

- Competency-based credit, and
- Equivalency course of study

“Competency-based credit”(CBC) is when a district awards credit for knowledge and skills a student demonstrates on a standardized test. The subject area for which the student receives credit is defined by state-adopted learning standards and the standardized test is aligned to these standards.

“Equivalency course of study” is the earning of high school credit, as permitted by WAC 392-410-300, for planned learning experiences conducted outside of a school or by educators who are not employed by a district.

(Note: work-based learning, credit for National Guard programs, and alternative learning experiences may also fall under the broad definition of competency-based learning or equivalency course of study, however, these learning experiences also have specific rules that apply. See [WAC Chapter 392-410.](#))

Competency-based Learning Framework:

	Competency-based Learning	
	Competency-based Credit (CBC)	Equivalency Course of Study
Basis for Credit	Existing knowledge and skills of the student as demonstrated by performance on a standardized test.	Knowledge and skills acquired through planned learning experiences approved by the district and monitored by the school.
Subject Areas	Core subjects with state learning standards.	Core subjects with state learning standards or non-core subjects with locally determined standards if there are no state-adopted learning standards for the subject.
Learning Standards	State learning standards.	State learning standards or locally determined standards if there are no state-adopted learning standards for the subject.
Assessment	Standardized test aligned to the specific learning standards.	Locally determined assessments.
Rules	WAC 180-51-050 High school credit—Definition	WAC 392-410-300 Equivalency course of study—Credit for learning experiences conducted away from school or by persons not employed by the school district.
Policy	WSSDA Model Policy 2409 or a similar written district policy.	A written district policy that addresses at least the provisions specified in WAC 392-410-300.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Language credit for proficiency on a standardized test such as STAMP 4S. Credit in Algebra 1 for proficiency on the Math Year 1 End-of-Course exam. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts credit for musical lessons and performance outside of the school. Credit for a non-district educational program such as Washington Aerospace Scholars.

Key Elements

School Board Policy

For districts to offer credit for competency-based learning, the district’s school board must adopt district policy. The kind of policy adopted depends on the type of competency-based learning—whether it is CBC or equivalency course of study.

In 2010, the Washington State School Director’s Association (WSSDA) created a model policy for Credit for Competency/Proficiency. The policy was designed for world languages, but could be used as a model for competency-based credit in other subjects. The WSSDA model policy 2409 and procedure 2409P are included as Appendix B in this memo. A district that seeks to award CBC (as depicted in the Framework), should adopt the WSSDA model policy or a similar policy.

If the credit awarded is an equivalency course of study as depicted in the Framework, then the school board policy should contain at least the elements outlined in WAC 392-410-300.

Standards

Washington State Learning Standards currently exist for the subject areas of English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, the Arts, Health and Fitness, Integrated Environmental and Sustainability Education, and World Language. CBC may be awarded in core subject areas for success on standardized tests aligned to the standards in the subject areas. Not all subjects have well-recognized standardized tests that are closely aligned to the learning standards, and CBC would not be possible for these subjects.

WAC 180-51-050 authorizes districts to determine learning standards in subject areas for which there are not state-adopted learning standards. In subjects for which there are no state-approved learning standards, or where state-adopted learning standards exist but not well-recognized, well-aligned tests, the type of competency-based learning that can be offered is an equivalency course of study.

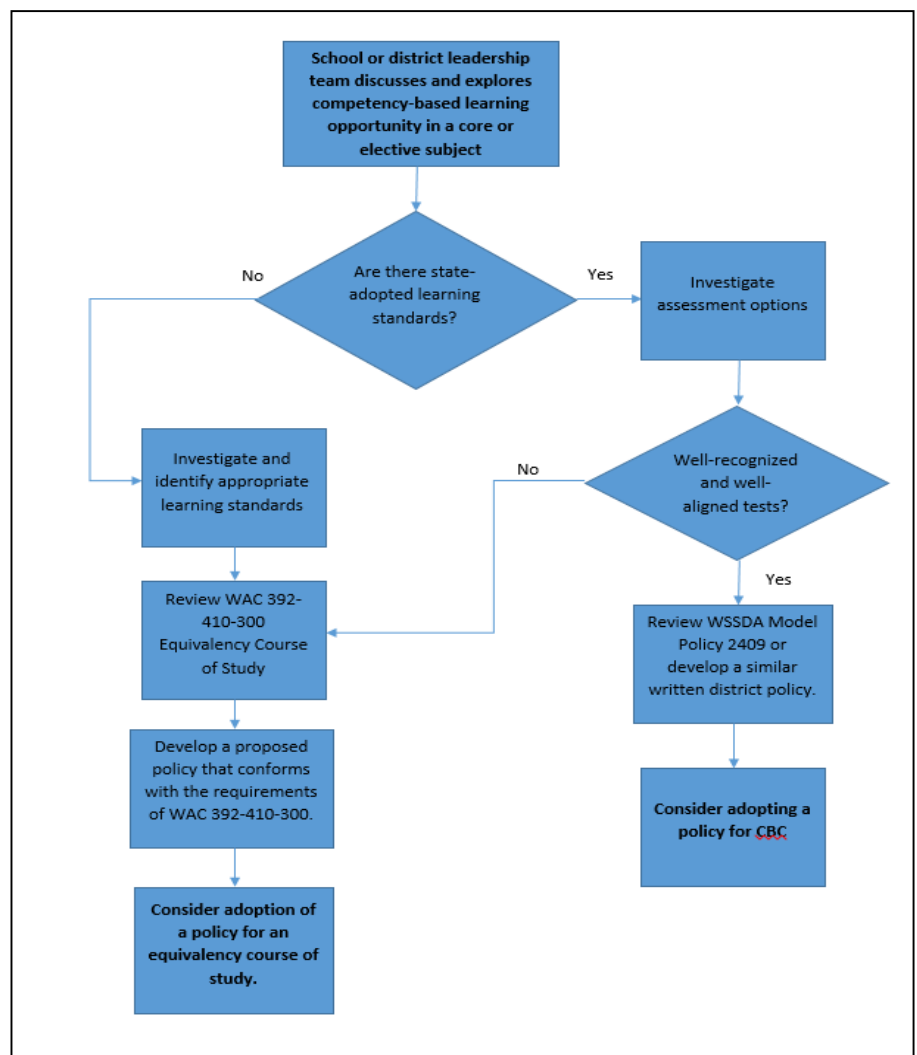
In an equivalency course of study, the range of standards and the particular standards for which credit is awarded through competency-based learning should be approximately the same as would be addressed in a corresponding classroom-based course in the same subject. A school or district may offer credit for competency-based learning in an area where there is not a corresponding classroom-based course in the district, but great care should be taken that the expectations and scope of standards covered are fully worthy of high school credit. Students engaged in competency-based learning should be exposed to all the critical standards to avoid gaps in their learning that would hinder their educational progress.

Procedures

In establishing competency-based learning opportunities, one of the first steps is to identify which type of competency-based learning could apply. The flow chart in Figure 1 illustrates a process for considering a CBC or an equivalency course of study.

In establishing procedures, some key questions to consider are:

- Are students equitably offered the opportunity to earn competency-based credit?



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- How transparent is the process and how will it be communicated to students and parents?
- How will the school or district track and monitor the progress of students engaged in earning competency-based credit?
- What supports are available to students and what personnel will it take to provide them?
- Who will monitor the student progress and direct students into supports when needed?
- How will the credit be transcribed? What graduation requirements and CADRs (College academic distribution requirements), if any, will it meet?

Assessment

Accurate, credible and useful student assessment information is essential to competency-based crediting. Assessment addresses the equity risk in a competency-based system, by allowing students to demonstrate their learning and holding the system accountable to providing the individualized learning for successful competency-based crediting. Assessments that support competency-based learning:

- Allow students to demonstrate their learning at their own point of readiness
- Contribute to student learning by encouraging students to apply and extend their knowledge
- Require students to actually demonstrate their learning
- Where possible, provide flexibility in how students demonstrate their learning (e.g. through a presentation, research paper, video, etc.)

Critical questions concerning assessment and competency-based credit are:

- What is “mastery” for a particular credit offering?
- What is the best assessment vehicles for students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge?
 - Assessments for competency credit need not be limited to standardized tests
 - Interim as well as summative assessments may be an important part of the assessment system for competency-based credit
- What level of achievement on the assessment constitutes a demonstration of mastery?

Transcription

WAC 392-410-050 specifies that the grade for a competency-based credit may either be a locally determined grade, or a “pass,” “fail,” or “no pass.”

The standard transcript allows for course designations for students who earn credit through a competency test. The designation identifies whether it is a Local Competency Test (“L”) or a National Competency Test (“N”). The OSPI Transcript FAQ defines each type of test (HS Transcript FAQ v.3.0 January 2016 OSPI – Student Information Page 40 of 52):

WAC 392-415-050 Grade reporting and calculation system.

(3) If high school credit is awarded on a competency basis as authorized under state board of education policy WAC 180-51-050(2), the district may use either of the following options for noting the students' performance on the state standardized transcript under WAC 392-415-070:

(a) Determine locally the equivalent passing mark/grade as listed under subsection (1) of this

64. What is the Local Competency Test designation?

Answer: Use this designation when a student takes a Local Competency Test in PK-12 schools in lieu of taking the actual class and passes via the score of that test. A Local Competency Test is a test only used in Washington State (i.e., with a local teacher).

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Courses designated as a Local Competency Test cannot also be Running Start. Running Start students take actual courses and not competency based assessments.

65. What is the National Competency Test designation?

Answer: Use this designation when a student takes a National Competency Test in PK-12 schools in lieu of taking the actual class and passes via the score of that test. A National Competency Test is a test that is used in Washington State and in one or more other states (i.e., STAMP, ACTFL OPI, OPIc, and WPT and LinguaFolio Collection of Evidence, or SLPI for ASL).

Courses designated as a National Competency Test cannot also be Running Start. Running Start students take actual courses and not competency based assessments

Frequently Asked Questions and Examples of Best Practices

[Each best practices would be summarized on a single sheet that would include:

- Location: school/district
- Subject or subjects offered for competency-based credit
- A statement about the district policy
- A statement about standards covered
- A description of the procedure/process
- Assessments used
- How the credit is transcribed
- Issues—risks and how they were addressed
- Highlights
- Contact]

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Can credit be awarded to students for passing state assessments?

Yes. A number of districts do this, most commonly for students who attempted but failed a course associated with an End-of-Course exam, but who score 'proficient' or higher on the exam. Typically, the student is awarded .5 credits.

Awarding credit for an established assessment that is well-aligned to state learning standards is a straight-forward example of competency-based crediting.

2. Does an assessment used for competency-based credit need to be a summative test?

No. The assessment could be a summative test, but interim tests, a series of unit tests, or other formats that could include papers, presentations, videos, that allow the student to demonstrate mastery of a skill or set of knowledge could be an assessment that supports competency-based credit. Assessments should be a meaningful learning experience for students, provide rich information to educators so they can provide targeted support to students, and send students and parents clear signals about students' readiness for next steps.

3. A student, because of transferring between schools or from a different state, failed to complete a full year of Algebra 1 or Geometry. The student is successful in Algebra 2 and Pre-calculus. Is the student

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required to complete the lower level math courses to meet graduation requirements, or could a district award competency-based credit for the missing math credit?

The district could have a policy to award credit for the missing math credit, with success in the higher level course constituting demonstration of mastery of the lower level content. It would be a best practice for districts to allow students who have been successful in their higher level math courses and would find a lower level math course repetitive and unchallenging to move forward in their math studies. However, the policy should address the definition of “success” (ie. a student who earns an “A” in Algebra 2 might be different from a student who earns a “D”) and should be carefully applied to ensure students avoid major gaps in their math knowledge.

4. Can districts award credit to students for educational trips?

Yes—but the district should consider the district’s policy, the standards being addressed, and how the learning will be assessed. The plan for credit should be proactive, and for the expectations to be fully described and communicated to students. Students simply having the experience of an educational trip is not sufficient for credit. Demonstration of mastery needs to involve assessment that cover the full range and depth of learning standards for which credit is being awarded. The policy permitting such credit should comply with WAC 392-410-300 Equivalency course of study (see Appendix A).

5. Could a district award credit to a student who took a family trip over the summer that included educational activities?

Generally no—while such trips can be enriching for students, simply having the experience of an educational trip is not sufficient for credit.

[Additional questions and answers will be added here].

Appendices

Appendix A: Rules on Competency Based Crediting

WAC 180-51-050

High school credit—Definition

As used in this chapter the term “high school credit shall 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).

WAC 392-410-300

Equivalency course of study—Credit for learning experiences conducted away from school or by persons not employed by the school district.

(1) Credit, including high school graduation credit, may be granted for school planned or approved learning experiences primarily conducted away from the facilities owned, operated, or supervised by the district or conducted primarily by individuals not employed by the district.

(2) School planned or approved learning experiences such as, but not limited to, travel study, work study, private lessons, and educational programs sponsored by governmental agencies may be accepted for credit upon compliance with written policies established by the district.

(3) Written policies which permit the granting of credit for such out-of-school learning activities shall be adopted by the district board of directors and shall be available to students, parents, and the public upon request. Such policies shall include at least the following provisions:

(4) A proposal for approval of credit for such learning experiences shall be submitted to the personnel designated in the written policy for review, revision, and approval or disapproval prior to the experience and shall include at least the following information:

- (a) Name of program or planned learning experience;
- (b) Length of time for which approval is desired;
- (c) Objectives of the program or planned learning experience;
- (d) Which one or more of the state learning goals and related essential academic learning requirements are part of the program or planned learning experience;
- (e) Description of how credits shall be determined in accord with WAC [180-51-050\(1\)](#);
- (f) Content outline of the program and/or major learning activities and instructional materials to be used;
- (g) Description of how student performance will be assessed;
- (h) Qualifications of instructional personnel;
- (i) Plans for evaluation of program; and
- (j) How and by whom the student will be supervised.

(5) The reasons for approval or disapproval shall be communicated to the students and parents or guardians.

[Appendix B: WSSDA Model Policy and Procedures](#)

[Appendix C: Achieve Resources](#)

[Appendix D: Resources From Other States](#)